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## Irish Travelling Artists: Ireland, Southern Asia and the British Empire 1760-1850

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Irish Travelling Artists: Ireland, Southern Asia and the British  
Empire 1760-1850

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Presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Art History,  
School of Arts and Culture, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the Open University,  
September, 2018.

### Personal Statement

No part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or other qualification of the Open University or any other university or institution. It is entirely the work of the author.

## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to show that Irish art made in the period under discussion, the late-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, should not be considered solely in terms of Ireland's relationship with England as heretofore, but rather, within the framework of the wider British Empire. As will be demonstrated, this approach both enhances Irish art-historical scholarship and contributes to more general studies concerning art and the British Empire.

During this time of accelerating imperial expansion, Ireland's experience of empire became increasingly ambivalent: Irish people moved through the empire as traders, soldiers and settlers, yet Ireland itself remained a colonised land. Thus, the analysis of art made by Irish travelling artists brings a new perspective to the question of art's role in the imperial project, since intra-imperial comparisons and contrasts may be made which would not otherwise be possible.

The thesis focuses on the work of two Irish artists who travelled to Southern Asia. Active initially in the commercial centre of Calcutta and then in the more militarised town of Madras, Thomas Hickey worked in India during a period of transition as British interests in the subcontinent shifted from those of trade to conquest and territorial expansion; consequently, his paintings offer illuminating insights into art's changing functions at a pivotal moment in Anglo-Indian relations. By contrast, Andrew Nicholl, travelled somewhat later to Ceylon, serving its colonial institutions as the British Empire reached the height of its power. Ceylon has rarely been discussed in the context of art and empire, the thesis, therefore, opens up a new area of scholarship informed by Nicholl's experience.



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## Introduction

The subject of Ireland and the British Empire has become a topic of great interest within the field of Irish studies in recent years. Scholars from different academic disciplines have moved beyond the more usual focus on Ireland's relationship with England to situate and discuss its history and culture within the context of the wider Empire.<sup>1</sup> However, Irish art produced during the period of British rule, has rarely been analysed within the framework of empire. It has previously been discussed in two main ways. It has most often been marginalised as a sub-section of, or subsumed within, histories of British or English art. Alternatively, within Ireland, as Fintan Cullen and John Morrison have argued, it has tended to be considered 'an embarrassing carbon copy of imperial production in England'.<sup>2</sup> This view is, of course, a reductive one, as the authors are at pains to emphasise; artistic practice in Ireland was much more complex. The present thesis aims to enhance understanding of Irish art further by considering the work and careers of two Irish artists who travelled to Britain's colonies in Southern Asia between the late eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries. The central claim here is that, contrary to the more usual Anglocentric or even European focus of Irish art histories, Irish art of this period, whether made in Ireland, Britain or British colonies overseas, should be analysed within the wider context of empire. As well as enhancing discussion of the Irish art world, this thesis will also contribute to a more general understanding of the dual role of art both in documenting and in furthering the processes by which the nascent British empire consolidated itself.

By basing the thesis on the work of two artists who came from different parts of Ireland and whose careers spanned a period of accelerated British territorial expansion from the nascent empire of the eighteenth century to its zenith in the mid-

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<sup>1</sup> Michael de Nie and Joe Cleary 2007: 5-10. See, for example, essays collected in Foley and O'Conner (eds), 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Cullen and Morrison 2005: 5.



nineteenth century, this thesis offers useful comparisons and contrasts that serve to illustrate how the experience of empire varied from place to place and over time. Thomas Hickey (1741-1824) was born in Dublin, the capital of Ireland and Andrew Nicholl (1804-1886) in Belfast to the north. Whereas Hickey was a portraitist, working in the traditional medium of oil painting, Nicholl produced landscape views in a range of media. In terms of background, art training and practice, the two had little in common but they both, for various reasons, pursued peripatetic careers, spending time in India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) respectively.<sup>3</sup> Hickey travelled to India with the permission of the East India Company in 1780 and again in 1798, while in 1792 he accompanied the Macartney Embassy on its diplomatic and trading mission to China. By contrast, Nicholl was appointed by the British Government to teach art in Ceylon, leaving Ireland in 1846. Neither of the two artists are well known today but consideration of their work offers an opportunity to study Irish art made in Southern Asia at a time when Britain's trading interests in the area increasingly intersected with imperial ambition.

The first section of this introduction considers the intersecting histories of Ireland, England and the wider British Empire, including the colonial histories of both India and Ceylon. It concludes with an overview of the theoretical approaches to writing about empire. Section two offers a review of art-historical literature concerning the nexus of art and the British empire. It begins by considering general developments in the literature concerning art and empire before discussing art-historical writing that focuses on India and Ceylon. The third section considers art, Ireland and empire. It begins by discussing the development of Irish art-historical writing before detailing scholarship concerning the two artists that are the focus of the thesis. It then offers biographical sketches of the artists before outlining the structure of the thesis and the aims of each chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> Place names throughout the thesis will be as used by the artists; thus, for example, Ceylon rather than Sri Lanka. India refers to the area of Southern Asia that today comprises, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India.

## Section One: Ireland, Britain and Empire

The question of Ireland's relationship with Britain provokes much scholarly debate.<sup>4</sup> This debate is complicated by Ireland's proximity to Britain, its similar climate and geography and the physical resemblance of the Irish people to the coloniser, all of which have made it difficult to conceive of Ireland as a colonised 'elsewhere'.<sup>5</sup> For some, Ireland's relationship with Britain has been a colonial one since the 1150s when the first settlers arrived in Ireland from Norman England. It was not, however, until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that full-scale systematic conquest and colonisation took place. Colonial rule was consolidated during the eighteenth century when Ireland increasingly served the needs of Britain's maritime trading empire: English was spoken in cities and towns, legal and financial systems were commensurate, and ports such as Cork and Waterford allowed for the transport of people and the export of Irish goods such as salted meat, butter and linen to North America and the West Indies. Though parts of Ireland prospered during the eighteenth century, the last decades of the century were punctuated by episodes of resistance and political challenges to British rule, culminating in the failed rebellion by the Society of United Irishmen in 1798.<sup>6</sup> With the enactment of the Act of Union in 1801 and the consequent dissolution of the Irish parliament, Ireland became increasingly implicated in the enlargement of Britain's territorial empire. From the middle of the eighteenth century, Irish men and women travelled throughout the British colonies as migrants and settlers, as soldiers with the East India Company and the Royal Army, as administrators and latterly as missionaries. Consequently, certain theorists of post-colonial studies maintain that Ireland was never truly colonial and

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Howe 2008, de Nie and Cleary (eds) 2007, Kenny (ed.). 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Kiberd 1996: 251-3, Kenny 2004:2.

<sup>6</sup> Established in Belfast in October 1791 and a month later in Dublin, the Society of United Irishmen campaigned for a parliamentary reform that would include Presbyterians and Catholics as well as members of the established Church of Ireland. Encouraged by events in France, and also by the opinions of the English radical, Thomas Paine, most particularly as stated in his *Rights of Man* published in 1792, the Society promoted its views through the *Northern Star*, a newspaper established in Belfast in 1792. Failing to achieve parliamentary reform, it subsequently became a secret society dedicated to obtaining French military support in order to achieve an Irish republic. The failed rebellion of 1798 resulted in sectarian violence and government reprisals. Bartlett 2011: 206-227.

should not be considered as post-colonial today.<sup>7</sup> The problem with this claim is that it plays down both the extent to which Ireland itself was subject to the 'civilising mission' of empire and the episodes of resistance and coercion that characterised its relationship with Britain. A more fruitful perspective is one that acknowledges that the Irish were doubly inscribed as both colonised and coloniser, as both subjects and agents of empire.<sup>8</sup>

Traditional histories of the British Empire have tended to focus on England and, more specifically, London as its metropole, with the result that the contributions of the 'home' countries of Ireland, Scotland and Wales to the imperial project have been marginalised. Recent scholarship has instead advocated a four-nation approach to the history of the British Empire, positing not only that the Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English viewed the Empire differently but also that the experience of Empire tended to reinforce their distinct national identities.<sup>9</sup> One way of understanding how such reinforcement took place is to consider transnational networks of patronage based on both kinship and ethnicity. Geographer Craig Bailey and historian Barry Crosbie have studied the multidirectional movements of an eighteenth-century Irish transnational network that linked Ireland, England, the West Indies, China and India.<sup>10</sup> Both Hickey and Nicholl benefitted from patronage based on ethnicity. By considering such patronage it is possible to assess the operational value of being Irish in terms of social and spatial mobility.<sup>11</sup>

Ireland's colonial relationship with Britain was particular; so too was that of India. From the early 1600s, India's contact with England had been through trade with the East India Company.<sup>12</sup> However, from 1765, when the Company acquired the *diwani* of Bengal, that is to say the right to collect land revenue, it began to take on governmental functions in India while remaining under partial supervision by the government in London.<sup>13</sup> The Company's largest factories or trading centres were

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<sup>7</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989: 33.

<sup>8</sup> Kenny 2004: 123-54, Howe 2008: 138-52, Crosbie 2012: 3-11.

<sup>9</sup> Crosbie 2012:5, Jeffrey (ed.) 1996, Mackenzie 2008: 1244-63, Washbrook 2010: 178-204.

<sup>10</sup> Bailey 2005, 2013, Crosbie 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Bailey 2005: 168-9, 176-7, Crosbie 2012: 1-97.

<sup>12</sup> See Bowen 2002: 19-32 for an overview of the development of the East India Company.

<sup>13</sup> Marshall 2006: 47, 51-54.

situated in the Presidency towns of Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai). Although the Company maintained its interests in India as a transoceanic trading company, it became increasingly identified with the British state and its policies of empire.<sup>14</sup> The Company gradually extended its territorial interests outside of Bengal, a development aided by the fact that the Mughal imperial court had been in decline since 1739 when Delhi was sacked by the Persian Emperor, Nadir Shah. Much of the court's power devolved to the rulers of its successor states: the nawabs of Arcot and Oudh and to the Nizam of Hyderabad. These states in their turn were weakened by a series of alliances they made with the British in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> However, British hegemony was resisted by the southern state of Mysore and the Maratha Confederacy (an alliance of the principal Maratha chiefs based in Western and central India). In a series of wars, the British defeated Mysore in 1799, took control of Delhi and Agra between 1803 and 1805 (the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam (r 1759-1806) became a pensioner of the Company) and the Marathas in 1818. By this date, the British had established themselves as the dominant European power on the subcontinent, having defeated their main rivals, the French, at Pondicherry in 1778. However, a continuing French presence in India, up to the early nineteenth century, offered support to both Mysore and the Maratha Confederacy in their resistance to British rule.<sup>16</sup>

Unlike India where the first British presence had been a commercial one, Ceylon from the outset was a British garrison state. Fear of the French invading the island contributed to the British decision to take the maritime provinces of Ceylon from the Dutch in 1796.<sup>17</sup> Ceylon was initially governed by the Madras presidency and then, from 1798, by Company representatives in Calcutta and the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London. In 1802, however, it became a Crown Colony and henceforth under the direct rule of the British government.<sup>18</sup> A large

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<sup>14</sup> Bowen 2002: 19-20,28-9.

<sup>15</sup> Crosbie 2012: 80-81. Under the Subsidiary Allowance Scheme, the Company established garrisons in Indian territories in return for subsidies or leases on productive land. The resulting financial strain increasingly weakened the indebted Indian territories.

<sup>16</sup> Crosbie 2012: 40.

<sup>17</sup> Sivasundaram 2013:43.

<sup>18</sup> Sivasundaram 2013:44.

military presence was maintained on the island due to ongoing wars with the central kingdom of Kandy; Kandy had remained independent under Dutch rule. A survey department had been quickly established on the island in 1802 with a full military survey of the interior being conducted in 1815.<sup>19</sup> This interventionist form of government had consequences for Nicholl, as the colonial art education offered in Ceylon was geared in part to surveying and map-making.

Given the colonial character of the relationship of Ireland, India and Ceylon with Britain, the area of post-colonial studies offers a useful site within which to develop a general methodological framework. Despite the vast growth of this field of study, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, first published in 1978, remains an indispensable point of reference. Said states that by the term Orientalism he means several things, all of which are interdependent.<sup>20</sup> Thus, for Said, Orientalism may be considered as a Euro-American academic discipline dedicated to the study of non-Western cultures and societies. It is also a binary mode of thinking which unfavourably compares and contrasts the East with the West; thus, serving as a justification for imperial expansion. In addition, he stresses that 'European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate or even underground self'.<sup>21</sup> In other words, colonial self-identity as superior depended on establishing the colonised as inferior in comparison. Furthermore, as is well known, Said posits that Orientalism is an institutional means for dealing with the Orient. Drawing on Foucauldian discourse theory, he suggests that selective knowledge or 'truths', collected and repeated within the powerful institutions of empire, *create* the supposed realities of the East.<sup>22</sup> Thus, European powers managed but also 'produced' the Orient.

*Orientalism* may be the founding text of post-colonial theory but it has also provoked considerable criticism.<sup>23</sup> As regards the present thesis, the most relevant critique is that of social theorists and historians who have challenged Said's work on

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<sup>19</sup> Sivasundaram 2007b: 932-34, 2013: 218-33.

<sup>20</sup> Said 2003: 2.

<sup>21</sup> Said 2003: 3.

<sup>22</sup> Said 2003: 2-3.

<sup>23</sup> See for example. Parry 1987: 1-2, Mackenzie 1995: xvii, Heehs 2003: 170, Irwin 2007.

the basis that his understanding of Orientalism is abstract and generalised, rather than being grounded in particular historical, political, economic and social examples. Given that colonial relations changed as Britain's Empire evolved, analyses of paintings throughout the thesis will be situated in the specific historical moment. It was further suggested that Said not only 'occidentalised' the West, that is to say he homogenised Western attitudes to the East, but also that, by contrasting an all-active coloniser with the supposedly passive colonised, he denied significant agency on the part of the colonised.<sup>24</sup> As outlined above, recent histories of empire tend to emphasise the particularity of colonial encounters; they differentiate between the experiences of the colonising countries as well as those of the colonised. Furthermore, historians whose work focuses on late eighteenth-century British India, while acknowledging the fundamental role of knowledge and power in the consolidation of colonial rule, have challenged the assumed passivity of the colonised. They demonstrate how indigenous intellectuals processed information before passing it to the British, pursued local agendas and brought alternative regimes of knowledge into play.<sup>25</sup>

It is not only historians, however, who have challenged Said's theoretical model; the work of Homi Bhabha is significant in the context of criticism of Said's binary approach. By considering colonial encounters in terms of dynamic concepts of performativity and ambivalence, he challenges such static models of difference. Rather, he sees such encounters as cultural negotiations that 'authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation'.<sup>26</sup> For Bhabha, cultural hybridities disrupt stereotypical accounts of the 'Other' affording the colonised a nuanced form of resistance. Other scholars, for example, Sara Suleri, have also underlined the 'conceptual blockage' of thinking solely in terms of difference and binary oppositions.<sup>27</sup> Suleri argues, that, within the context of India,

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that Said addressed these issues in Said 1985 and Said 1994. For a series of essays by historical geographers that consider both the paradoxically 'eurocentric' nature of post-colonial studies in reinforcing Western superiority and the occidentalising of the west see Graham and Nash (eds). 2000.

<sup>25</sup> See for example, Bayly 1996, Wagoner 2003, Trautmann 2009, Peabody 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Bhabha 2010: 3,1-12,122-23.

<sup>27</sup> Suleri 1992: 12.

acknowledgement of imperial intimacies and analysis of mutual narratives of complicities are more productive.<sup>28</sup>

For the purpose of this thesis, however, it is necessary to engage not only with debates around Orientalism but also with ideas of tropicality, which served as a means by which Europeans distinguished places in the world that were culturally but also environmentally distinct from themselves. The historian David Arnold argues that critiques of Orientalism which descend from Said's analysis of literary texts are inadequate since a discussion is also required which includes physical and social studies centred on science and the natural world.<sup>29</sup> Arnold maintains that the tropics should be considered as a conceptual as well as a physical space distinct from the 'norm' of the temperate zone.<sup>30</sup> As Arnold explains, intra-tropical links connecting disparate regions of the tropical world developed as an imperial plantation economy emerged in the late eighteenth century. Furthermore, travel accounts, literature and natural histories intersected. For Arnold, such mixing resulted not only in persistent affirmative tropes of tropicality, such as, light, colour, fecundity, exuberant nature and adventure, but also negative tropes of nature's tyranny: disease, sloth and moral weakness amongst island dwellers.<sup>31</sup> Given that Ceylon is a tropical island and that Nicholl painted views of the Ceylonese landscape, tropicality is directly relevant to the analysis of his work.

The tropes of tropicality thus overlap with those of Orientalism and help to refine an undifferentiated sense of an exotic elsewhere. A third important concept that intersects with Orientalism and tropicality is that of primitivism. Primitivism is a polyvalent term with both positive and negative connotations. It has had a fundamental and highly diverse impact on European art practice since at least the eighteenth century, in ways that extend beyond the remit of this thesis. Nonetheless, a key point is that primitivism cannot exist and do its work without its conceptual opposite: civilisation. As primitivist discourse intersects with modern imperial discourse, it contributes to what Said has described as the 'positional superiority' of

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<sup>28</sup> Suleri 1992: 1-15.

<sup>29</sup> Arnold 2008: 3-4.

<sup>30</sup> Arnold 2005: 35, Arnold 2008: 2-4.

<sup>31</sup> Arnold 2008: 3-4.

the coloniser; thus, serving as an apologetic for imperialism.<sup>32</sup> Colonised societies are described as a-historic, archaic or static, compared to the progressive, modern society of the coloniser; their people deemed variously to be childlike, effeminate, ignorant, indolent, fecund, or irrational in contrast to the rational coloniser.<sup>33</sup> These terms were reiterated in descriptions not only of far-flung societies but also the Irish.<sup>34</sup>

One further feature of primitivist discourse is that temporal distance as well as spatial distance is used to distinguish those remote from the Western metropolis. The anthropologist Johannes Fabian, for example, discusses temporality in terms of the denial of coevalness; so-called primitive peoples are considered to exist in the same physical, that is to say, chronological, but different typological time from the coloniser.<sup>35</sup> Thus, English society as representative of modern civilisation, may be contrasted with supposedly primitive societies, which, though contemporaneous, are considered backward as they have failed to evolve in a manner commensurate with the ideals of European modernity.<sup>36</sup> During the colonial period, the politics of time and its implications of cultural belatedness were used to denigrate marginal communities in Europe; as the historical-geographer, Catherine Nash, argues, however, the ambivalent colonial position of Ireland actually disrupts a straightforward model of social development whereby modernity and progress are mapped onto imaginary geographies of metropolitan core and primitive periphery.<sup>37</sup> Ideas concerning primitivism are relevant to this thesis, allowing intra-imperial comparisons and contrasts to be made between Ireland, India and Ceylon; particularly, as will be shown, in terms of the representation of their historic landscapes.

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<sup>32</sup> Said 2003: 7.

<sup>33</sup> Bindman 2002: 8, Antliff and Leighton 2003: 217-33.

<sup>34</sup> Said 1994: 266-9, Kiberd 1996: 9-29, Lennon 2008: 48-57. Lennon also describes how the English further denigrated the Irish by likening them in terms of barbarity to Orientals, including Arabians, Spanish Moors and Turks.

<sup>35</sup> Fabian 1983: 25-35.

<sup>36</sup> Fabian 1983: 27.

<sup>37</sup> See Kiberd 1995: 29-32, Lennon 2004: 48-57 for a discussion of how the Irish were represented as 'backward' in English literature; Nash 1999: 459, Nash 2000: 13-37, Ogborn 2008 analyse historical-geographies in terms of empire.



Irish histories, dating from the mid-twentieth century, have tended to focus on the nation state's relationship with England, ignoring Ireland's involvement in British imperial expansion. More recently, scholars have highlighted how Ireland's history intersected with that of the wider British Empire.<sup>38</sup> However, an area that remains understudied is that which considers the reciprocal encounters between empire and Irish culture: in particular, as concerns the visual arts. This is an oversight that the present thesis aims to redress through its study of the art produced by Irish artists as they travelled through the wider British Empire. Furthermore, the thesis not only contributes to Irish art history but also to the more general study of art and the British Empire. Hickey lived and worked in India during a period of great change as Britain's maritime trading empire gave way to a territorial empire of conquest. Thus, study of his portraits is illuminating in terms of the function of Western art at a key point in Anglo-Indian relations. By contrast, analysis of Nicholl's Ceylonese landscapes not only draws attention to Ceylon, an island that has not been studied within the framework of Western art and empire, but also draws attention to the role of art in an interventionist colonial state. Finally, the fact that the two artists came from Ireland, itself a colonised land, permits comparisons and contrasts to be made throughout the thesis that would not otherwise be possible.

## Section Two: Art and the British Empire

Until very recently a reluctance to engage with the disputed legacy of the British Empire has meant that art showing imperial subjects was rarely displayed. In 2015, however, Tate Britain staged the exhibition *Artists and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past*. Broad in scope, the exhibition reflected the diverse and fragmentary character of empire, not only displaying work by British artists but also art made by the colonised in response to conquest. While not intending to downplay the iniquities of empire, it attempted to draw out the complexities, interdependence and

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<sup>38</sup> See for example Jeffery (ed.) 1996, Kenny (ed.) 2004, Crosbie 2012.

multidirectional nature of the influences that arose from colonial encounters. The staging of such an exhibition was made possible by the emergence of art-historical scholarship that focused on the subject of art and empire. Amongst the first to argue that empire should be a fundamental category in the analysis of British art were Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham in their introduction to a collection of essays titled *Art and the British Empire* (2007), which they edited. Despite the range of essays, considering work made in a variety of media in both overseas territories and in Britain, Ireland is not mentioned. Nevertheless, this book is significant, not only because a central tenet of the present thesis is that, likewise, empire must be central to any discussion of Irish art made in the colonial period, but also the editors stress that visual images, whether fine art, prints, book illustrations or the work of amateur artists, made in the context of empire, may have a formative role to play in the processes of empire.<sup>39</sup> In the editors' words such images function as 'sites of ideological intervention' and, in certain instances, may act as 'active agents of social and political change'.<sup>40</sup> The essays in this book contributed to an increasing debate in Britain concerning empire and its aftermath.<sup>41</sup>

The approach of the authors whose work appears in *Art and the British Empire* differs markedly from the earliest accounts of art and empire which tended to be descriptive catalogues amplified with biographical detail.<sup>42</sup> A key type of art that scholars have addressed is portraiture. Portraits, have often been reproduced in histories of the British Empire, where they have been used to document likenesses of historical individuals. However, this is to treat historically specific portraits merely as visual reflections of social or political 'facts', with little effort being made in such texts to analyse differing relationships of power embedded within the works. More recent scholarship concerned with empire has built on the innovative social history of eighteenth-century art of the 1980s. One of the first scholars to analyse portraiture

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<sup>39</sup> Christopher Pinney echoes this assertion when he writes of artistic practice in the context of empire as a 'formative zone of debate'. Pinney 2013: 232.

<sup>40</sup> Barringer, Quilley, Fordham 2007: 7.

<sup>41</sup> See for example, the five-volume Oxford History of the British Empire and its Companion Series, Jasanoff 2006, Darwin 2008, Mishra 2013, Tharoor 2017. Accounts of art and empire include Hook 2010, Quilley 2011.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, Archer 1979, Bayly 1990.

in terms of rank and power was David Solkin who focused his study on ‘grand manner’ paintings of elite British men.<sup>43</sup> Solkin does not write directly about empire, but his analysis is relevant in that it shows how apt this style of portraiture was for aggrandising the British elite as an imperial ruling class. As will be discussed, Hickey had ambitions to make grand style public art both in Ireland and India. The feminist art historian Marcia Pointon also discusses portraits in terms of differential relations of power and identity. In *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (1993) she writes against the grain of patriarchal art histories and in a series of case studies looks not only at fine art but also popular forms such as prints. Neither Solkin nor Pointon discuss the question of art, power and empire; nevertheless, by addressing issues of power, scholarship on colonial portraiture benefitted from their approach. In more recent art history, portraits are considered as ideological constructs in themselves; such imagery produced within the context of Empire has come to be considered itself as a kind of text, indicative of social, cultural and political change.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, colonial portraiture, has frequently come to be seen as constitutive of the processes of Empire itself: a case made more plausible by the use of portraits in diplomatic gifting and in displays of imperial power.<sup>45</sup>

Moving from a general discussion of art and empire to India, consideration of the historiography of Irish and British art in India begins with the numerous publications of the art historian Mildred Archer based on her extensive archival work; she catalogued the collections of the Oriental and Indian Office, now known as the Asia, Pacific and African Collections, of the British Library. Archer’s comprehensive survey of Western art made in India ranged across natural history drawings, landscapes and portraiture, prints and drawings. Of particular relevance to this thesis is her *India and British Portraits 1770-1825* (1979). Archer estimated, that between 1770 and 1825, as many as thirty professional portraitists in oils (including Hickey) and twenty-eight miniaturists travelled to the subcontinent in search of patronage.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Solkin 1986: 42-9.

<sup>44</sup> Tobin 1999: 110-38, Ray 2011:185-98.

<sup>45</sup> Eaton 2007: 189-204, Eaton 2008: 63-93, Eaton 2013: 151-94, Pinney 2012: 231-61.

<sup>46</sup> Archer 1979: 36.

It has been suggested that Archer's work should be considered in terms of historical and personal context as late imperial texts; they nonetheless remain an invaluable resource.<sup>47</sup> Pratapaditya Pal, Vidya Dehajia, Pheroza Godrej and Pauline Rohatgi, for example, have all built on her work in their study of Western art made in India.<sup>48</sup>

Archer's approach may be contrasted with that of Natasha Eaton who has written extensively about British art produced in late eighteenth-century India. Whereas Archer's method is historical and biographical, Eaton's is multidisciplinary and draws on anthropology, post-colonial theory and studies of material culture. Eaton focuses on the intersection of British and Mughal society, contrasting different regimes of taste, value systems related to power and personhood, competing concepts of cosmopolitanism, culturally specific forms of gifting and the agency of art in colonial diplomacy.<sup>49</sup> She draws on the scholarship of Bhabha in her analysis of the ambivalent status of art works as signs and symbols of an incomplete translation of British culture in the colonies. Eaton considers, for example, the role played by mimesis in the display and exchange of Western-style portraits by Mughal leaders.<sup>50</sup> By simultaneously mocking and mimicking British cultural practices, Eaton argues, the Mughals opened up a space of resistance to colonial rule; thus, they could not be 'othered' as inferior. Eaton also assesses the role of collecting and display in imperial self-fashioning by both Europeans and Mughals, acknowledging the work of historian Maya Jasanoff in this field.<sup>51</sup> Eaton's work has been highly influential and is of particular use to the present thesis given that the period she covers correlates with the time Hickey spent in India.

Another pictorial genre that played a key role in the context of empire was landscape which accordingly also featured prominently in writing on art and empire. Landscape in the form of mapping or surveying obviously facilitates territorial expansion by supplying useful knowledge to colonial institutions. However,

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<sup>47</sup> Barringer, Quilley and Fordham (eds) 2007: 9.

<sup>48</sup> Pal and Dehejia 1986, Rohatgi and Godrej (eds) 1995, Godrej and Rohatgi 1989. Rohatgi and Godrej were both involved in the staging of the exhibition *Indian Life and Landscapes by Western Artists* (2008) that travelled from London to Mumbai.

<sup>49</sup> Eaton 2004a: 818-21, 837-8, Eaton 2007: 189-204, Eaton 2008: 63, 75, Eaton 2013: 151-94.

<sup>50</sup> Bhabha 2010: 1-12, 122-23. Eaton 2004a: 816-44.

<sup>51</sup> Eaton 2004a: 839, Eaton 2007: 200, Jasanoff 2006: 32-9.

landscape is also implicated in the visual appropriation of land through its representation. Early scholarship by John Barrell considered the English landscape in terms of ideologies of class. W. J. T. Mitchell broadened the issues raised by Barrell to embrace the imperial dimension.<sup>52</sup> A key text is Mitchell's influential essay 'Imperial Landscape', published in 1994, which suggests that, as empires move outwards through new territories, the exploration of foreign land is accompanied by a renewed interest in the home landscape. Thus, the intersection of the medium of landscape and discourses of empire is a two-way process.<sup>53</sup> The field of study of imperial landscape has developed since Mitchell wrote the essay, with for example a major exhibition of the work of landscape artist William Hodges, *William Hodges 1744-1797: The Art of Exploration* staged by the National Maritime Museum in 2004 and the publication of John Crowley's *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture 1745-1820* in 2011.

Scholars building on Mitchell's work have suggested that in the context of late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth century Britain and its colonies, this process was mediated via the picturesque.<sup>54</sup> Further claims underlining the intersection of discourses of empire and nationhood, as mediated through landscape, have been made for the picturesque in terms of British colonial identity.<sup>55</sup> Thus, Jeffrey Auerbach argues, the picturesque aesthetic 'helped to unite and homogenise the many regions of the British Empire' through an expanding sense of 'Britishness'.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, John Crowley suggests that the conventions of the picturesque, permitted disparate regions to be aligned, reinforcing a sense of British imperial domination.<sup>57</sup> For Ian McLean, it was the flexibility of the picturesque as constitutive of both national and colonial identity that led to its success as 'an art of the empire'; for British-born residents of the colonies its conventions served as a means by which an

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<sup>52</sup> Barrell 1990, 1991.

<sup>53</sup> Mitchell 2002: 5-17.

<sup>54</sup> Auerbach 2004: 48, Crowley 2011: 2-5, See essays by Ian McLean, David Hansen, Michael Godby for discussion of this topic in Barringer, Quilley, Fordham 2007: 23-38, 38-53, 84-99.

<sup>55</sup> See for example Ray (2013), Barringer, Quilley and Fordham (eds) 2007, Jeffrey Auerbach 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Auerbach 2004: 47. See also Crowley 2011: 1-8. Much of Crowley's work descends from that of J.G.A. Pocock who has argued that Britain itself was a cultural construct dependent for its identity on its interaction with its wider Empire. Pocock 1975: 601-28.

<sup>57</sup> Crowley 2011: 2.

otherwise threatening landscape could be visually appropriated in a reassuringly nostalgic manner. By extension, these conventions permitted both the foreign and strange to be described in familiar terms to an audience in Britain.<sup>58</sup> By contrast, Romita Ray argues that picturesque views of disparate colonial landscapes are neither homogenous nor even strictly British but rather 'enmeshed in the ambivalences of being colonial'.<sup>59</sup> Going beyond consideration of the picturesque in terms of landscape, she analyses performance, spectacle, portraiture of Indian royalty and material culture such as board games and toys within its terms. Drawing on Bhabha's ideas of identity as dynamic and fluid, Ray offers a comprehensive account of the picturesque as constitutive in constructing a British colonial identity both at home and abroad.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, the surviving paintings made by Irish and British artists in India have been treated in various ways. Where this thesis departs from existing literature is in the consideration it gives to art produced in Ceylon. With the exception of contributions to exhibition catalogues by the architect and art historian Ismeth Raheem and art historian Rajpal de Silva, little has been written about Western art practice in Ceylon.<sup>61</sup> This may be simply due to the fact that whereas many professional artists travelled to India, very few went to Ceylon. The bulk of Western art representing Ceylon in the first half of the nineteenth century was, in fact, made by soldiers, most of them officers. Nicholl, being a professional artist, was an exception in this respect. Given the paucity of art-historical literature concerning Ceylon, more general texts such as those concerning amateurs and soldiers' drawings, travel writing, botanical science, landscape and empire and, art's contribution to the global imagining of empire have proved invaluable.<sup>62</sup> Of further use for the point of comparison of Ceylon with India, has been literature that considers Western responses to Indian art and architecture, for example, the work

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<sup>58</sup> McLean 2007: 26.

<sup>59</sup> Ray 2013: 11, 259. Unfortunately, Ray who works in America uses the terms British and English interchangeably with little reference to the Scots or Welsh and none to the Irish.

<sup>60</sup> Ray 2013: 98-99, 259.

<sup>61</sup> Raheem 1986, Silva de 1998. Raheem has also published newspaper articles concerning Nicholl's time in Ceylon. Raheem 2017.

<sup>62</sup> See for example, Sloan 2000, Mitchell 2002, Leask 2002, Arnold 2005, 2008, Bonehill 2009, Ray 2013.

of Partha Mitter and Tapati Guha-Thakurta and that of Saloni Mathur who examines the role of colonial art education in India.<sup>63</sup> Sujit Sivasundaram's *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka & the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony* (2013), establishes the colonial specificity of Ceylon and offers accounts of Ceylonese land and its ancient cities that are vital to discussions of Nicholl's work.

Scholarship concerning portraiture, landscape, art and empire is all directly relevant to the present thesis. Of further concern is how the particular period in the history of the British Empire, that forms the framework of the thesis, is addressed in the literature. Reference to Eaton's work on India during this time was made above. Eleanor Hughes and Geoff Quilley have also focused on the later decades of the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century; a time when Britain's imperial strength rested in its maritime rather than its territorial empire following the loss of its American colonies in 1782. Both scholars highlight the formative role of the making and display of maritime paintings in the construction of a sense of Britain as an imperial nation; thus, underlining the mutuality of British nationhood and empire as mediated by art.<sup>64</sup> Further scholarship to be noted, that considers the period between the 1770s to the 1830s, is that of literary scholars Hermione de Almeida and George Gilpin who published *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (2005).<sup>65</sup> The central thesis of this book is that the 'discovery' of Indian culture in the late eighteenth century led to a renaissance in the arts, inspiring the British and European Romantic movement while displacing the arts and culture of the antique as central to the Western canon.<sup>66</sup> The sole reference to Indian art, however, is in the concluding chapter. Though the authors explore the response of Western artists to what they saw and experienced on travelling to India, they do not discuss the reception of their art in Britain. Nevertheless, the study is relevant not only in terms of periodisation but also it offers analyses of the paintings of both well-known and less well-known artists such as Hickey. However, the authors offer an assessment of artworks as 'Romantic' that often, particularly in examples

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<sup>63</sup> Mitter 1992, Guha-Thakurta 2004, Mathur 2007, see also Kantawala 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Hughes 2007: 139-53, Quilley 2011.

<sup>65</sup> For reviews of this book see Tillotson 2007: 58-61, Silva de 2007: 283-9.

<sup>66</sup> The idea of an 'Indian Renaissance' was first mooted by Raymond Schwab in his book, *La Renaissance Orientale* (1950).

from the last quarter of the eighteenth century, cannot be borne by the pictures. Furthermore, there is a tendency to consider artists who worked in India in the 1770s and 1780s as pre-imperial and more open to contact with Indian society than those of later decades who are seen as imperial and more removed. As will be demonstrated in the present thesis, close study of Hickey's output in India challenges such a clear-cut demarcation; it highlights the uneven nature of change from place to place as British interests in India became increasingly colonial in orientation.

The present thesis enhances art-historical research concerning art, empire and India. Hickey was active in India at a specific moment in Anglo-Indian relations as the fluidity of contact based on commerce and trade gave way to increased distancing consequent on conquest and territorial expansion. As noted above this transition varied from place to place and with time. Hickey's long Indian career is not only of interest because it straddled this period of change but also, he was active in two very different Presidency towns: Calcutta and Madras. Illuminating comparisons and contrasts may therefore be made as regards the function of Western art in the two towns. The thesis also broadens the scope of literature concerned with Western art and empire by discussing landscape views and Ceylon, a country rarely included in such research.

### Section Three: Ireland, Art and Empire

Where this thesis also breaks new ground is of course in exploring art and empire with specific reference to Irish artists. As previously noted there has been a tendency in the past to subsume Irish art history of the colonial period as a marginal subsection within British art history. The first work to essay an accurate account of Irish art and artists was Walter Strickland's *Dictionary of Irish Artists* published in two volumes in 1913, which remains a standard work today. A scholar and acting director of the National Gallery of Ireland, Strickland believed in a distinct Irish School; thus, he considered his dictionary to be both a resource and a form of redress. Nevertheless, aware of how the art worlds of Ireland and England intersected,



Strickland included biographies of both Irish artists working abroad and English artists working in Ireland. In 1904, the art dealer Sir Hugh Lane staged his *Exhibition of Works by Irish Painters* at London's Guildhall. Comprising 465 exhibits, the display presented a broad range of art made by Irish artists to the English viewing public. By the means of his exhibition, Lane may have hoped to highlight the existence of a distinct 'Irish School' of art, but in Ireland itself, particularly after the establishment of the Irish Free State, much of the art shown was denigrated as colonial. The first exhibition of Irish art made during the colonial period to be actively promoted as more than a mere subset of British art, *Irish Portraits 1660-1860*, seen in Dublin, London and Belfast, was not held until 1969. In the accompanying catalogue, Anne Crookshank and Desmond FitzGerald wrote that 'the aim of the exhibition was to reveal a not inconsiderable facet of what is normally called British Art', adding that 'the Irish facet has been left untouched even in its own country'.<sup>67</sup> Scholars working in recent decades who have analysed the particularly 'Irish facet' of eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century art practice include John Turpin who has explored the development of art education in Dublin and Eileen Black who looks at how art practice developed in Belfast.<sup>68</sup> 2014 saw the publication of the five-volume *Art and Architecture of Ireland*; Volume II, *Painting 1600-1900* which builds on Strickland's pioneering work, offering an account of both Irish art practice of the period and artists' biographies. *Painting 1600-1900* establishes the specificity of the Irish art world while drawing attention to both the influence of European art practices and its close ties to the English art world.

Other scholarship that not only situates Irish art within a local context but also considers the work that Irish artists made outside Ireland, for example, in France and America, is that of Fintan Cullen. Rather than the prevalent Anglocentric focus of Irish art history Cullen also makes illuminating comparisons and contrasts between the visual culture of Ireland and Scotland.<sup>69</sup> By turning eastwards, to study the work of Irish artists made in Southern Asia, the present thesis aims to broaden that scope. One of the few studies of eighteenth-century Irish portraiture to move beyond the

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<sup>67</sup> Crookshank and FitzGerald 1969: 11.

<sup>68</sup> Turpin 1986, 1990, Black 2006.

<sup>69</sup> Cullen 1997, 2004, 2005, 2012.

usual monograph is Cullen's *The Irish Face* (2004) which offers an overview of Irish portrait practice across a wide time span from the end of the sixteenth century to the present day. In this study, Cullen introduces a topic concerning eighteenth-century Irish art and the colonial situation that is directly relevant to a discussion of Hickey: the question of conflict and its consequences for art practice. The conflict in question is the failed rebellion in 1798 of the United Irishmen. Mediated through an analysis of the art practice of Hickey's direct contemporary, Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808), Cullen demonstrates how the threat of conflict resulted in a sense of uncertainty amongst artists as regards the future of their profession. He also highlights the use of portraits in political propaganda by both the administration and the United Irishmen.<sup>70</sup> More recent studies by Mary Clark and Jane Fenlon have looked at the role of vice-regal portraiture in Dublin Castle and the Mansion House and the serial display of regal, ducal and judicial portraits in the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham respectively, in reinforcing ideas of colonial power and domination.<sup>71</sup> Chapter three of the present thesis examines the use and display of official portraits made by Hickey in Madras; thus, it both contributes to and develops such scholarship.

Recent research on Irish art also sheds new light on the picturesque, which, as already noted, was a key term for the discussion of English domestic and colonial views. Likewise, the picturesque tour subsequently became a means of experiencing the Irish landscape with designated routes inspiring many paintings.<sup>72</sup> Finola O'Kane analyses the Irish picturesque, in terms of Ireland's relationship with England, and more particularly its status as a colonised land.<sup>73</sup> She argues that 'seeing landscape as a picture' removes the responsibility of seeing it from other perspectives in particular from that of a local person.<sup>74</sup> In other words, the framed view as mediated through Western conventions of landscape not only gave the artist licence to include or modify picturesque features at will but also to exclude anything disagreeable, threatening, or suggestive of oppression and conflict, thus distancing the spectator

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<sup>70</sup> Cullen 2004: 147-81.

<sup>71</sup> Clark 2016: 61-89, Fenlon 2016: 179-97.

<sup>72</sup> O'Kane 2015: 80, O'Kane: 2013.

<sup>73</sup> O'Kane 2013, 2015.

<sup>74</sup> O'Kane 2013:2.

from the land and the reality of life for its users. This of course applies equally to English landscape views which frequently excluded evidence of the economic use of the land and the plight of the rural poor. However, an extra layer of meaning is added in a contested colonial landscape such as Ireland, when the landlord, who may also be a potential patron, differs from the local not only in terms of class but also confession and ethnicity; in Ceylon, race is a further critical distinction. As will be discussed, Nicholl's landscape views are not easily aligned with the conventions of the picturesque. Nevertheless, due to its wide social currency, and the fact that its use extended well into the nineteenth century, the picturesque, most particularly the colonial picturesque is an important point of comparison. Other fields relevant to a discussion of Nicholl's images include antiquarian and topographical studies.

The two artists to be discussed in the thesis are rarely studied. Both Hickey and Nicholl have been the subjects of biographical accounts, such as articles that appeared in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* by George Breeze and Martyn Anglesea respectively, in 1983 and 1982. Breeze presented an MA thesis, 'Thomas Hickey 1741-1824' in 1973, while Nicholl was the subject of Helena Murtagh's M.Litt, 'Andrew Nicholl: Artist, Teacher and Traveller' of 2009. Short pieces concerning their work have also appeared in exhibition catalogues.<sup>75</sup> Of the two artists, Hickey is the subject of the most scholarship; nevertheless, it is not extensive. Pointon briefly discusses one of his paintings in her examination of the work of less well-known artists.<sup>76</sup> Archer, who includes Hickey in her account of portraitists active in India between 1770-1825, offers the most detailed account of his career, both providing biographical information and allowing his work to be compared with his contemporaries in India.<sup>77</sup> Some of Hickey's Indian portraits are also discussed by de Almeida and Gilpin.<sup>78</sup> Also of use when assessing Hickey's paintings are monographs of his contemporaries, those concerning Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) or George Chinnery (1774-1852), for example, provide useful comparative contexts for discussing his stylistic development and his sojourn in Bath (in Gainsborough's case),

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<sup>75</sup> See for example Bayly (ed.). 1990, Silva de 1998: 6-23, Smith, Brown and Jacobi (eds) 2015: 173, 175.

<sup>76</sup> Pointon 1993: 99.

<sup>77</sup> Archer 1979: 204-233.

<sup>78</sup> Almeida and Gilpin 2005: 85,175,232-3,296.

as well as patronage of art in Dublin and India (in Chinnery's case). More recently two of Hickey's Indian portraits have been the subject of an essay, 'Loss and the Families of Empire: Thoughts on an Irish Artist's Portrait of a Bibi' by Darcy Grimaldi Grigsby, published in 2016.<sup>79</sup> While detailed study of Hickey's work is welcome, her analysis is somewhat problematic. A lack of contextualisation means that the article has a somewhat abstract character, dealing generically with art and empire as such rather than the specifics of Hickey's career. Grigsby also argues that Hickey's approach to his Indian subjects was determined by the fact that he was a colonised subject himself.<sup>80</sup> At no point in this thesis will it be suggested that the artists under discussion displayed an essential or characteristically Irish sensibility. By contrast to Grigsby's essay, an essay by the present author 'Commerce, Conquest and Change: Thomas Hickey's *John Mowbray, Calcutta Merchant, attended by a Banian and a Messenger*' published in 2016, situates the discussion at a specific historical moment in Anglo-Indian relations. Furthermore, it considers the visual vocabulary available to Hickey in order to interpret embedded relations of power in the image in a meaningful way. The operational value of 'Irishness' is also assessed through Hickey's involvement with an Irish transnational network of patronage.

The two artists, whose peripatetic careers are the focus of this thesis, differed in terms of where they were from in Ireland, training in art practice and the medium in which they worked. A point of similarity between Hickey and Nicholl lies in the fact that both men came from artisan backgrounds: Hickey was the son of a Dublin confectioner, Nicholl the son of a Belfast bootmaker.<sup>81</sup> Lacking both monetary support and family connections that could have facilitated the development of their careers, the two men actively sought financial security throughout their working lives. Though both were moderately successful, when the opportunity for personal advancement arose through travel within the British Empire, they took it. In other words, they were enabled by empire.

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<sup>79</sup> Grigsby 2016: 52-79.

<sup>80</sup> Grigsby 2016: 53.

<sup>81</sup> Hickey's father was a successful confectioner becoming a freeman, by service, of Dublin. Breeze 1983: 156.

The analysis of Hickey's and Nicholl's careers, to follow, underscores the complexity and interconnected nature of empire. The thesis is structured in such a way as to highlight the role of geographical and temporal factors in shaping the work and career of the two artists. Thus, the four chapters move from Ireland to Calcutta, Madras and finally Ceylon. They are also organised chronologically allowing contrasts to be drawn between the earlier period of the nascent British Empire (with reference to Hickey) and the later period which saw an established territorial Empire supported by an imperial bureaucracy (with reference to Nicholl). The aim of the first chapter is to consider why Hickey became a travelling artist and how his professional experiences in Ireland shaped the form his practice would take in India. Beginning by comparing and contrasting the art worlds of Dublin and London, it then focuses on Hickey's Irish career, situating it in a colonial context, before considering the emergence or otherwise of an 'imperial aesthetic' in Ireland and Britain during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the operational value of 'Irishness' at the end of the eighteenth century as demonstrated by Hickey's participation in an Irish transnational network of patronage that linked Dublin, London, China and Calcutta.

Chapter two considers Hickey's first period in India which he spent in Calcutta, the commercial and political capital of British India. It starts by considering the ways Hickey may have imagined India before setting sail, based on prevalent conceptions of the day. A constant theme throughout the discussion of Hickey's career is his never-ending search for patronage. Therefore, the chapter continues with an analysis of Hickey's agency as he not only built on his Irish connections in Calcutta, but also actively promoted himself as an erudite artist of substance. Hickey's portraits, discussed in the final section, demonstrate the uses of colonial portraiture. Moreover, he was active in Calcutta during a time of transition as British commercial interests in the subcontinent became increasingly colonial in orientation. His paintings that include Indian subjects are therefore of interest, not least because they offer illuminating insights into what was an increasingly contested economic, political and cultural space.

Contrasts and comparisons in terms of time and place may be made within Hickey's own practice as his final stay in India was spent mainly in the more militarised town of Madras in southern India. Madras was the first port of call for most Irish and British arriving in India. Its distance from Calcutta is highlighted by the fact that it took between eight days and six weeks to sail from one town to the other. When in Madras, Hickey received not only private but also public patronage due to being the only professional artist in the region at the outbreak of the fourth Mysore War in March 1799. Chapter three, therefore, begins by examining the role of portraiture in imperial propaganda at a time of military conquest. In order to administer newly conquered territories, surveys were carried out with the aim of gathering useful knowledge. Hickey painted the portraits of military surveyors and their Indian assistants; it is possible to analyse such group portraits in terms of competing yet intersecting forms of both Western and indigenous knowledge. Discussion of an unusual group portrait by Hickey of three Indian women then introduces further questions concerning knowledge, power and control of the colonial body itself, as a British programme of smallpox prevention is considered.

The fourth chapter focuses on Ceylon, a country that has been under-discussed in scholarship concerning art and empire. Throughout this chapter comparisons and contrasts are not only drawn between Nicholl's experience of empire in Ceylon and that of Hickey during the earlier period in India but also between Ceylon and Ireland as both were colonised lands. It starts, therefore, by considering Nicholl's early practice in Ireland and developments in Irish landscape art as they pertained to his work. This analysis leads on to a discussion of the role of colonial art education, considering how it served empire by teaching mapping and technical drawing, but also how through instruction in Western design it benefitted Britain's increasingly industrialised trading empire. In addition, discussion of Nicholl's time teaching art at the Colombo Academy demonstrates the role of landscape in the development of a political consciousness among a small section of the colonised population. Graduates of the Academy contributed to a journal *Young Ceylon*, which in a similar manner to the radical group Young Ireland, valorised the historic landscape of their homeland. The final two sections focus on Nicholl as an imperial

traveller, considering his watercolours, drawings and illustrated travel accounts. As well as highlighting Nicholl's on-going interest in botanical and antiquarian studies, comparing and contrasting his Irish and Ceylonese practices, this chapter also considers how Nicholl's mass-produced texts, which reached a large audience, helped shape the way that Ceylon was understood in both Ireland and Britain.

The work of this thesis represents a similar approach to Irish art made during the colonial period as a recent exhibition held in Dublin. In 2016, as part of the decade of commemorations, the National Gallery of Ireland staged an exhibition *Creating History: Stories of Ireland in Art* to mark the centenary of the Easter Rising. In the accompanying catalogue, Ruth Kenny discusses the depiction of conflict, both martial and political, in Irish art. She emphasises that, rather than offering an 'unequivocal record' of historic events, this art needs to be analysed with reference to questions of power, patronage and the expectations of the viewing public at specific junctures in Ireland's long colonial relationship with England.<sup>82</sup> She contrasts the 2016 exhibition with *Cuimhneachán 1916 (Remembrance 1916)* staged in 1966, that displayed many of the same works. As Kenny notes, the stated aim of the earlier exhibition was to document three hundred years of Irish resurgence through art. No critical analysis of the paintings was offered that might suggest either the complex, often contested meanings embedded within the works or why they were made and for whom. In a similar manner to the aims of the 2016 exhibition, the present thesis does not consider art made in the context of empire as a record of 'facts' but rather in terms of differential relations of power. Where it differs is that it moves beyond Ireland's relationship with England to situate the analysis within the wider context of empire; thus, drawing attention to Ireland's ambivalent colonial status and the consequences for Irish art practice in the period under discussion.

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<sup>82</sup> Kenny 2016: 60, 47-62.

## Chapter One

### The Making of an Irish Travelling Artist: 1750-1800

The chronological period spanning the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth saw many Irish artists pursue peripatetic career paths. During these decades Irish artists travelled to both Britain and continental Europe, while others went further afield, journeying within territories outside Europe under British control. They left Ireland for various reasons, including economic necessity, the need for further training, career ambition and the search for adventure. Travelling within the burgeoning British empire, artists, including the two to be discussed in the present thesis, tended to follow established commercial, diplomatic and military routes. Thomas Hickey followed the commercial routes of Britain's trading empire to India and China, while by contrast, Andrew Nicholl left Ireland for Ceylon at a time when Britain's territorial empire was not only established but also supported by an imperial bureaucracy that afforded him the opportunity to travel.

Hickey's and Nicholl's careers have few points in common but central to an understanding of both are the intersecting forces of commerce, empire and nation. Throughout the eighteenth century, Irish parliamentarians fought for equal trading rights within Britain's wider maritime empire.<sup>1</sup> Protests gathered momentum in the 1770s, ultimately leading to both improved trading conditions and the resolution of certain constitutional grievances. The latter resulted in the Irish parliament gaining the power to legislate for Irish affairs in 1782. However, the 1790s became increasingly politically unstable, leading to the failed rebellion by the United Irishmen and subsequent reprisals. A concatenation of events culminated in the enactment of the Act of Union in 1801 whereby Ireland entered into a constitutional union with

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike Scotland for example, Irish merchants could not import goods directly from Britain's trading empire; profitable goods such as tobacco and sugar were re-exported to Ireland from Glasgow. For an overview of Ireland's long eighteenth century see Bartlett 2011: 156-266.



Britain, resulting in the dissolution of the Irish parliament. The Union debates, in both the Irish and British parliaments, underlined the extent to which questions concerning Britain's territorial empire and Ireland's role within it permeated contemporary political discourse.<sup>2</sup> Problems of sectarian conflict, rural poverty, absentee landlords and the draining of capital from the country remained unresolved, however, with the question of Catholic emancipation and latterly repeal of the Union dominating political debate during the first decades of the nineteenth century. By the middle of the century Ireland was in the grip of famine; from 1845-51 around a million people died from starvation or disease, while a further million and a half emigrated between 1845 and 1855.<sup>3</sup>

Political and economic instability contributed to both Hickey's and Nicholl's need to travel in search of financial security. However, their practices differed not only in terms of time and place, but also in media, genre, training, patronage and the length of time spent travelling within the wider British Empire. The form that their practices took also differed. Social structures changed as the direct, personal culture of the eighteenth century, based on flexible intersecting networks, gave way to the increasingly institutionalised world of the nineteenth.<sup>4</sup> Hickey was typical of his time, in that his career depended on building close personal ties with patrons, which in turn led to further commissions. Nicholl had one or two important patrons, but in the main was more removed from potential clients: marketing his paintings through advertisements placed in the press, exploiting technological advances in printing which allowed him to mass-produce his images and promoting his work through the illustrated press.

Factors external to art practice contributed to Hickey's and Nicholl's need to travel, but so too did factors within the Irish art world itself. Developments in landscape art relevant to a discussion of Nicholl's Irish work will be considered in chapter four of the thesis; the aim of the present chapter is not only to explore the social, cultural and economic factors that encouraged Hickey to travel in the latter

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<sup>2</sup> Bartlett 2004: 82-5

<sup>3</sup> Jackson 1999: 69, Bartlett 2011: 281-96.

<sup>4</sup> See Retford 2017: 35-44 for a discussion of the importance of taverns, clubs and coffee houses as places for men to meet and make connections that would facilitate their careers.

decades of the eighteenth century but also to investigate what it meant to be an Irish artist at that date, in terms of both spatial and social mobility. This chapter will therefore begin by comparing and contrasting the eighteenth-century art worlds of Dublin and London, which, for geographical, political, social and cultural reasons, were inextricably linked. However, significant differences did exist, for example, in terms of scale, training and patronage, all of which played a determining role in artists' decisions to travel. The focus will be on Dublin, where Hickey received his early training, since it was the centre of the Irish art world, but attention will be drawn to the later development of art institutions in other Irish cities and towns with a particular focus on Nicholl's hometown of Belfast in the nineteenth century. The second section will consider portraiture as it developed in the period with particular reference to Hickey's practice in Ireland, highlighting the role of art in both furthering and challenging the British colonial project. The section concludes by discussing whether or not increasing engagement with the wider world through exploration, trade and latterly territorial expansion in the last quarter of the eighteenth century resulted in the emergence of a distinctively imperial aesthetic. The third section will not only consider 'Irishness' as a marker of difference, but also, by studying an Irish transnational network of patronage, will highlight the operational value of 'Irishness' as it pertained to social, economic and professional support for travelling artists.

### Section One: Eighteenth-Century Art Worlds in Dublin and London

Although Ireland started from a lower economic base than England, parts of the country prospered during the eighteenth century. When considering the Irish eighteenth-century art world, the focus is necessarily on Dublin as it was the only city with artistic institutions. This section therefore, concerns Hickey's early training and career. Dublin, the political, economic and cultural capital of the island, benefitted from being the seat of both the Irish Parliament and the court of the lords-lieutenant of Ireland. It was also the site of Trinity College, the only university in Ireland at the time. Other important commercial and trading centres included the ports of Cork and

Waterford to the south and south-east respectively and Limerick in the south-west. All of these cities benefitted from the arrival of people and ideas not only from England, Scotland and Wales but also from continental Europe. They also had access to major intellectual and cultural developments in Britain and elsewhere, thanks in part to an expanding book and print trade, which in turn received encouragement from the foundation in 1731 of the Dublin Society for the improvement of Husbandry, Manufacture and other Useful Arts and Sciences, one of many learned societies founded in cities across Europe during the eighteenth century, and that of the Royal Irish Academy in 1785, which encouraged the study of science, literature and antiquities.<sup>5</sup> As the century progressed, members of the Irish aristocracy, such as James Caulfield, first Earl of Charlemont, Frederick Hervey, Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry and Joseph Leeson, Earl of Milltown went on the Grand Tour. Not only did these men return to Ireland with collections of art but they also offered patronage to Irish artists studying and working both at home and abroad.

By contrast to Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick, Belfast in the north remained a small town, owned in its entirety by the Earl of Donegall, during this period. A further difference, which would have consequences for the patronage of the visual arts in the town, was the presence of an established middle class. Initially the core of this middle class comprised well-educated professionals, including Presbyterian ministers and medical practitioners. However, as the century progressed, the mercantile expansion of the town resulted in its transformation from a largely professional class to a commercial one.<sup>6</sup> A turning point in Belfast's fortunes occurred when the White Linen Hall opened in 1784 as a trading centre and exchange. As the linen industry expanded, a growth in provision industries and a rise in numbers of merchants and ship-owners followed. Thanks to the wealth generated by the linen industry, cultural life in Belfast began to flourish: 1785, saw the foundation, for example, of a Society for Promoting Knowledge, renamed the Linen Hall Library in 1788. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Belfast

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<sup>5</sup> The English Copyright Act of 1709 did not apply to Ireland; thus, there was a healthy reprint trade: books and periodicals were copied and were in turn cheaper than the originals. Kennedy 2012: 356-75.

<sup>6</sup> Beckett 1969: 179-82. Bartlett 2011: 14.

enjoyed a period of unprecedented growth. Intellectual and political life there was dominated by former United Irishmen, many of whom had been radical Presbyterians from Belfast, and who now campaigned vigorously for political reform, including Catholic emancipation.<sup>7</sup> 1821 saw the establishment of an influential scholarly society, the Belfast Natural History Society, which became the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society in 1842. Nicholl was an early member as was his most important patron and exact contemporary, James Emerson, later Sir James Emerson Tennent.<sup>8</sup> A self-taught artist, Nicholl developed his early practice within this intellectual milieu.

Artistic life is something that distinguishes Dublin from Belfast in this period. One obvious difference was the presence of an aristocracy that offered patronage to ambitious artists; Dublin also differed in making provision for art education. Dublin was far from the cultural wasteland it was claimed to be by the Revd. Dr Samuel Madden in 1739 when he expressed the wish that 'in a very few years we shall have an Academy for Painting and Sculpture set up even in this Western Desert of the World'.<sup>9</sup> However, Ireland, in a similar manner to England, had lagged behind its continental neighbours in the formalising of art education and practice. A key role was played here by the Dublin Society, the aim of which was to improve economic conditions in Ireland not least by disseminating knowledge and new ideas.<sup>10</sup> The founders of the Dublin Society, notably Madden, not only promoted the commercial usefulness of both the fine and decorative arts, but also emphasised that a formal training in the arts would foster discernment and taste and bring 'virtue, learning and Glory' to Ireland.<sup>11</sup> By 1740, the Society was awarding annual premiums, funded by Madden, for both painting and sculpture.<sup>12</sup> From 1746, the Irish Parliament, gave

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<sup>7</sup> See Wright 2013b, for a comprehensive appraisal of these so-called 'natural leaders'.

<sup>8</sup> James Emerson was educated at Trinity College Dublin. Abandoning his studies, he fought in the Greek war of independence. On his return he was called to the Bar in London but never practised. He married the daughter of William Tennent, a prominent merchant in Belfast and former United Irishman; taking his father-in-law's surname. He campaigned for political reform in the town and was returned for Belfast as an independent Whig in 1832. Anglesea 1982: 130-2. For details of his later career, see thesis chapter four, p. 184, footnote 59.

<sup>9</sup> Madden 1739: not paginated.

<sup>10</sup> Turpin 1990: 106.

<sup>11</sup> Madden 1731: 13.

<sup>12</sup> Madden 1739: not paginated, Turpin 1990:110.

financial support to the Society's educational programmes, including the drawing schools which pupils now attended free of charge.<sup>13</sup> The Dublin Society Drawing School was established in the same year; links were made to an existing drawing school run by Robert West which was absorbed into that of the Society four years later.<sup>14</sup> The school was later divided into three sections to consist of the Figure School under Robert West; the School of Ornament and Landscape formed in 1756 under James Mannin; and the School of Architecture, established in 1764 under Thomas Ivory. A School of Modelling under Edward Smith was only added in 1811.<sup>15</sup> The Society schools were to remain at the centre of Irish art teaching for over a century.<sup>16</sup>

Dublin remained the only city in Ireland to benefit from a government-sponsored institution dedicated to the teaching of art until the early nineteenth century. In 1816, private individuals established the Cork Society for Promoting the Fine Arts providing the impetus for the establishment of a School of Art in 1818.<sup>17</sup> In contrast to its flourishing intellectual life, Belfast developed no art institutions before the 1830s. The first exhibiting society, the Belfast Association of Artists was founded in 1836 with the landscape artist Hugh Frazer (*fl* 1826-81) as president and Nicholl serving on the committee.<sup>18</sup> The first dedicated art school, funded by the government, the Belfast Government School of Design, was opened in 1849. Rather than teaching the fine arts, its aim was to train local artisans as designers for the local textile industry. The Belfast School was one of twenty two such institutions founded in Ireland and Britain from 1837 to 1852.<sup>19</sup> In 1852, schools of design were established in Waterford, Cork and Limerick.

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<sup>13</sup> Turpin 1990: 106, 111.

<sup>14</sup> Hodge 2008:10.

<sup>15</sup> Painting was not taught in Irish art schools until 1823 with the formation of the Royal Hibernian Academy.

<sup>16</sup> Drawing schools with a utilitarian purpose were established in Glasgow 1754, Edinburgh 1760, and Birmingham 1760-62. Unlike the Dublin school however, none survived on a long-term basis. Turpin 1990: 109.

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of Irish art education see Figgis(ed.) 2014: 23-40.

<sup>18</sup> Black 2006: 48. Largely due to public apathy the exhibitions were not a success and the society folded in 1838. It was not until 1879 that an exhibiting society was founded which endured.

<sup>19</sup> The Belfast School of Design opened in the northern wing of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution which had opened a private drawing school in 1814. Black 2006: 16, Figgis (ed.) 2014: 24.

By contrast to Nicholl, Hickey, benefitted from an academic education in art practice in both Dublin and London as well as a sojourn in continental Europe. He attended the Society schools, winning five prizes for drawing between 1753 and 1756.<sup>20</sup> Under the tutelage of West, who was reputed to have attended the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris, the Dublin Society School offered a French model of instruction.<sup>21</sup> Rather than deriving from the French Royal Academy, however, this model recalled the principles of the *écoles gratuites de dessin*, which were well established in various regions of France by the middle of the eighteenth century. This type of school offered a free training in drawing to artisans, with the aim of facilitating mercantile economic expansion, by improving not only the skill of the craftsmen but also their taste; the training offered was intended to be a supplement to existing apprenticeships not an alternative.<sup>22</sup> In Dublin as in France, pupils were taught drawing and draughtsmanship in the dry media of crayon and chalk. They also copied engravings and old master drawings, progressing to the drawing of plaster casts of antique statuary and received lessons in human anatomy.<sup>23</sup> Thus, although undoubtedly practical and design-orientated, the art education provided by the Society Schools mediated between the applied and the fine arts, there was no clear-cut distinction between the two. If students in Dublin wished to pursue a career in painting, carving or modelling it was necessary to seek an apprenticeship with an established artist skilled in the relevant discipline; this was similarly the case for pupils at the French Royal Academy.<sup>24</sup> The need for further training often necessitated removal to England and gifted students were also sponsored to travel to Italy in order to further their studies: thus travel formed an integral part of an artist's training. Hickey was in Italy from 1761/2-1767, reaching

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<sup>20</sup> Willemson 2000: 47, Breeze 1983: 157.

<sup>21</sup> Drawing masters trying to establish themselves in Dublin often advertised French experience. James Mannin was also trained in France. Hodge 2008: 10, Crookshank and FitzGerald 1969: 17.

<sup>22</sup> In Dublin pupils attended the Society schools twice a week for three hours and could thus continue with an apprenticeship if they so wished.

<sup>23</sup> The collection of casts was begun in 1751 with a gift of casts sent from Rome by Lord Charlemont. Master drawings included works by Le Brun, Watteau, Boucher, Ricci, Italian masters and Dutch naturalistic subjects. Turpin 1990: 113-14.

<sup>24</sup> Figgis (ed.) 2014:3.

Rome in 1762 and Naples in 1765.<sup>25</sup> Neither evidence of how he was funded nor any works from his Italian sojourn have survived.

The majority of the pupils who attended the Dublin Society Schools were the sons of artisans and craftsmen. Hickey, for example, was the son of a confectioner, while his contemporary, Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808) was the son of a wig maker. Graduates of the schools applied the skills they had learned in a variety of activities, such as architectural drawing, mapping, producing designs for the textile industry and, as engravers. Others applied the grammar of decorative motifs that they learned in the School of Landscape and Ornament in designs for silverwork and decorative plaster ceilings.<sup>26</sup> Some became landscape artists or portraitists; many of the latter were apprenticed to miniaturists. Paul Caffrey has estimated that at least forty one miniaturists who worked in Dublin in the latter half of the eighteenth century trained in the Society Schools.<sup>27</sup> Further graduates, including Hamilton and Hickey, benefitted from their training in dry media and worked as pastellists. Pastels although immensely popular were dismissed by the leading artists of the day as 'what ladies do when they paint for their own amusement'.<sup>28</sup> Ambitious artists painted in oils. However, in contrast to pastels, oil paintings were expensive and slow to produce. The number of potential patrons was therefore much smaller, particularly so in Ireland.

Nevertheless, Hickey, arguably motivated by high ambition, took the economic risk of moving from dry media to oil painting, and had largely abandoned pastels by the 1770s. Hamilton also painted in oils, but he continued to produce pastels until at least 1794, owing much of his success to the production of small oval heads in the medium.<sup>29</sup> Hamilton also differed from Hickey in that from the outset he had established a firm base of aristocratic patrons. On leaving the Dublin Society School, Hamilton had initially found employment drawing the frontispiece for John Roque's estate atlas (1760) of the Manor of Kilkea, a property belonging to the Earl

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<sup>25</sup> Figgis 2001:260, Breeze 1983: 157.

<sup>26</sup> Turpin 1990: 114.

<sup>27</sup> Caffrey 2000: 26.

<sup>28</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds commenting on the work of the Swiss pastelist Jean-Etienne Liotard as quoted in Kenny 2008: 25, footnote 6.

<sup>29</sup> For an overview of Hamilton's career see Kenny 2014: 280-82.

of Kildare, later the first Duke of Leinster.<sup>30</sup> This was Hamilton's first encounter with the FitzGerald family, the most important aristocratic family in Ireland, and through them he also met the Conollys of Castletown House. William Conolly, the Speaker in the Irish Parliament, was a self-made man, who's grand-nephew and heir, Thomas Conolly, married into the aristocracy; his wife, formerly Lady Louisa Lennox, was the sister of the Duchess of Leinster. Both families became important patrons. Hamilton then moved to London in 1763/64, where, working as a pastellist, he met and subsequently benefitted from, a large number of upper class patrons who then gave him further commissions in oils. Hamilton is not believed to have travelled to Italy until 1781/2, where he stayed until his return to Dublin in 1792. His practice was by then largely based on oil painting although he continued to accept commissions for pastels from long-standing patrons such as the FitzGeralds. Hamilton was more commercially astute than Hickey; by limiting his practice to those who could afford to commission a portrait in oils, Hickey had reduced the possibility of ever establishing a career in Ireland that would offer financial security, thus prompting his peripatetic career.

Although the Society schools offered Irish artists, like Hickey and Hamilton, an education in European artistic practice, the proximity of London made the city a popular destination for ambitious practitioners seeking both further training and more patronage than Ireland could afford. London had, by this time, become a thriving centre of mercantile capitalism, which explains the commercial approach of its art institutions including the Society of Artists of Great Britain, founded in London in 1761, which became the Incorporated Society of Artists in 1764. However, as a powerful maritime nation, Britain was competing with other European countries trading in the Americas, as well as the West and East Indies. Trading interests were increasingly intertwined with territorial and colonial expansion and consequently this period was one of almost constant conflict between various European powers overseas. Britain's success on the international stage led to pressure for its

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<sup>30</sup> Roque was a Huguenot cartographer who had a print shop located near the Dublin Society's Drawing School. He employed many of its graduates to illustrate his maps. The frontispiece was an important commission as it was the visual introduction to the maps. Unusually, the 20 year old Hamilton has signed his frontispiece. The FitzGeralds were a powerful landowning family with eight Manors, a large country seat at Carton in Co.Kildare and a Dublin townhouse. Hodge 2008: 11.



mercantile and military prowess to be matched by art institutions to compare with those of its great rival, France. Thus, in December 1768, the Royal Academy of Arts was set up under the patronage of George III. After four years trying to establish himself as a portraitist in Dublin, Hickey left Dublin for London where he enrolled in the Academy schools as a painter on 11 June 1771 and his brother John (1756-1795) as a sculptor on 20 January 1772.<sup>31</sup>

By contrast to the practical, design-focused, commercial aims of the Dublin Society Schools, the Royal Academy provided an academic training, with its first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, delivering and publishing a series of fifteen theoretical *Discourses* between 1769 and 1790. However, Reynolds could not avoid addressing issues of the day, including the question of a national school of art, which in its particularity, ran counter to his promotion of a great universal art as advocated in *Discourse* III (1770). Reynolds approached the subject of a national school through a discussion of ornament, by which he meant such details as background and drapery. In *Discourse* VII (1776) he proposed that, while 'second nature' or custom as indicated by ornament must always take second place to primary or universal nature in high art, ornament did have the capacity to indicate a local custom, which, in its turn, might suggest the national character of the work: ornament was therefore worthy of consideration by the arts.<sup>32</sup> Reynolds' analysis thus raises the possibility of a national taste that transcended that of an individual. Significantly, therefore, any national school of art could now be proposed without it being diminished as merely local in comparison with the universal ideal. In *Discourse* IX presented in October 1780 Reynolds proposed a 'School of English Artists', linking excellence in the fine arts to a sense of national pride and distinction when compared to continental neighbours, particularly the French.<sup>33</sup>

No less important, when attempting to raise the status of art practice in England, was the question of how to accommodate the role of trade in providing the means to support the development of the fine arts, which Reynolds also addressed

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<sup>31</sup> Breeze 1983: 160.

<sup>32</sup> Reynolds 1992: 193-201.

<sup>33</sup> Reynolds 1992:229.

in his discourse. He warned of the dangers of being consumed by commerce as an end in itself.<sup>34</sup> What was at stake, given its supposed excesses and appetites, was whether a commercial society like that of England could also be a moral one. Reynolds promoted the role of the artist as 'virtuously useful', contributing to the 'perfection' of society.<sup>35</sup> With no tradition of history painting in Britain, he also endeavoured to promote portraiture and to a lesser extent landscape as great art by introducing the ambitions of high art into the genres. Reynolds' argument to this effect did not, however, go unchallenged. The Irish artist James Barry (1741-1806), an aspiring history painter, attributed the popularity of portraiture and landscape in England to commercial society's desire to acquire 'things'. For Barry, a topographical landscape view, for example, was simply a portrait of possessions, or of land inviting possession: an argument that resonates given Britain's increasing imperial expansion at the time.<sup>36</sup> Hickey, like Reynolds, had grand manner ambitions for his art; by positioning himself in the European tradition of high art he may have hoped to escape the supposed inferiority of a provincial Irish identity.

Whilst the arts may have been deemed morally improving in both Ireland and Britain, professional artists needed to sell their works. One way they could attract patrons was by exhibiting their work. In both Dublin and London, exhibiting practices began to be formalised during the eighteenth century. Drawings by artists competing for Dublin Society premiums were put on public display, for example.<sup>37</sup> Theatres also served as quasi-exhibition spaces, where artists, such as the Irish landscape artist Robert Carver (1730-91), demonstrated their skills in painting theatrical backdrops and designing sets.<sup>38</sup> In both Dublin and London the public could also visit artists' studios and view works in progress.<sup>39</sup> Visitors to Hamilton's studio, for example, could view portraits of figures who dominated public life in Dublin, the artist's sitters ranging across the political spectrum from the charity preacher Rev. Walter Blake

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<sup>34</sup> Reynolds 1992:229.

<sup>35</sup> Reynolds 1992: 230.

<sup>36</sup> James Barry, 1775, *An inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England* in Harrison, Wood, Gaiger (eds), 2000: 665-68, Barrell 1991: 41-61.

<sup>37</sup> O'Keefe 1826: 191.

<sup>38</sup> Crookshank 1969: 16, Butler 2014: 120-121.

<sup>39</sup> Drennan-McTier letters 1998-9, Vol 1: 258, Vol 2: 348.

Kirwan, through members of the political establishment, such as Lord Moira, to the United Irishmen, Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor.<sup>40</sup> However, following the example of the Society of Artists of Great Britain, the first professional context for exhibiting art came with the establishment in 1764 of the Society of Artists in Ireland, which, from 1766, held public exhibitions in a purpose-built (the first to be so, in either Ireland or Britain) top-lit, octagonal gallery on William Street in Dublin.<sup>41</sup> Hickey exhibited three portraits with the Society in 1768, three in 1769 and five in 1770. In 1780, and by now in Bath, he exhibited a further two portraits with the Society.<sup>42</sup> Exhibitions in the William Street gallery continued almost annually until 1780 when they were suspended for financial reasons. In 1800 the Society was renamed the Society of Artists of Ireland and exhibitions recommenced.<sup>43</sup>

Although Irish artists exhibited in Dublin, they also hoped to do so in London at the Society of Artists and the Royal Academy.<sup>44</sup> Hickey exhibited regularly in the Royal Academy, showing fourteen paintings and seven crayon drawings in total.<sup>45</sup> The much larger London exhibitions not only provided Irish artists with opportunities to attract new patrons, but also afforded an opportunity to view stylistic innovation and to be seen and judged by their peers. The importance of this exposure to new ideas is highlighted by a series of letters written by Hamilton to the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova (1751-1822) between 1794 and 1802. When he started writing the letters, Hamilton had recently returned to Ireland from Italy where he had spent more than ten years in the company of wealthy patrons on the Grand Tour and artists of repute, including Canova, John Flaxman (1755- 1826), Gavin Hamilton (1723-1798) and Henry Tresham (1751- 1814). Hamilton lamented that being back in Ireland was ‘...almost like being in exile for one who truly loves art’; not only were there no artists of talent but he also had nobody with whom he could discuss art. <sup>46</sup> The limited

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<sup>40</sup> Drennan-MacTier letters 1998-9, Vol 2: 348, letter dated 20 November 1797.

<sup>41</sup> Kenny 2018: 17-43.

<sup>42</sup> Breeze 1985: 14.

<sup>43</sup> Appendix, Figgis (ed) 2014: 521.

<sup>44</sup> In 1777 the William Street exhibition hall accommodated its maximum of 223 exhibits. Kenny 2018: 30. By contrast the Royal Academy displayed 489 exhibits in 1780, rising to 1200 in 1797. Laffan: 2014: 18-19.

<sup>45</sup> Figgis 2001:200.

<sup>46</sup> Hamilton 1794-1802 in Cullen 2000: 188-9.

number of written accounts existing today make it difficult to assess the critical appreciation of the fine arts or the sophistication of potential patrons in eighteenth-century Ireland, and therefore to decide whether Hamilton's comments were justified or not.<sup>47</sup> If Hamilton's experiences of the art worlds of both London and Italy are set against the smaller scale of the Dublin art world, it is probable that they were.

In Ireland as in England the fine art market was a highly competitive business. However, Dublin differed from London in the paucity of potential patrons relative to the population of artists. Artists did make their work more accessible to a wider market by having engravings made after their images; prints could be afforded by both the professional and middle classes. Nevertheless, as with paintings, the aristocracy and gentry were the most important patrons. Lord Charlemont, for example, owned an extensive collection of prints whilst Lady Louisa Conolly followed fashionable practice in the 1760s by decorating a room at Castletown House with cut-out engravings pasted on the walls. The art market, dependent as it was on a small circle of aristocratic patrons and members of the Dublin Society, was very vulnerable to change.

In some ways, as already discussed, Irish artists benefitted professionally from the proximity of Dublin to London but closeness also had its disadvantages; aristocratic patrons for example, could choose to sit instead to fashionable portraitists in London. Furthermore, as a rapidly expanding and increasingly prosperous city, Dublin attracted artists from elsewhere who competed with Irish-born artists. One such artist was the Swiss painter Angelica Kauffmann (1741-1807) who, on the invitation of the then lord-lieutenant in Ireland, Viscount Townshend, spent six months in Dublin in 1771.<sup>48</sup> The arrival of Kauffmann in Dublin may have contributed to Hickey's decision to leave Ireland for England in the same year. Having painted Townshend's portrait in 1769, Hickey had presumably entertained hopes of further prestigious commissions but none were forthcoming. During his sojourn in Italy, Hickey had moved in artistic circles which included Kauffmann, thus he was well aware of her European-wide reputation, and may have anticipated a desire by the

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<sup>47</sup> Kenny 2008: 19.

<sup>48</sup> Breeze 1983: 160.

Dublin aristocracy to sit to her, further reducing potential patronage for himself. Unlike Kauffmann, other visiting artists remained in Dublin for considerable periods. The English artist Robert Home (1752-1834) for example, arrived in the city in 1779 and stayed until 1789. Home was well connected and had introductions to the Lord Chancellor and the Vice-Provost of Trinity College amongst others.<sup>49</sup> Home's practice in Dublin subsequently declined and he returned to London in 1789. A contributing factor in his departure, which underlines the uncertain nature of Dublin patronage, was the arrival of the American artist Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828) in Dublin in 1787. Home then left London for India in 1790, his Indian career overlapping with that of Hickey.

The vulnerability of the Irish art market, dependent as it was on a small group of patrons, is further emphasised if the effects of the political instability of the 1790s are considered. Throughout the 1790s Ireland was riven by conflict, culminating in the failed rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798. Meanwhile, Britain was almost constantly at war with at first Revolutionary and then Napoleonic France. British fears of a French invasion in support of the United Irishmen resulted in the garrisoning of approximately 100,000 troops in Ireland by 1798.<sup>50</sup> Hickey, who returned briefly to Dublin in 1796, underlined the then precarious nature of the Irish art market in a letter written in 1797.

A number of friends soon gave rise to a promising career of practice in my business, which continued in animating progress until the period of threatened invasion from the French, which gave an instant turn in every thought, directing it to national defence, and converted into martial enterprise and ardour the spirit that had been attracted to the encouragement of the arts.<sup>51</sup>

The enactment of the Act of Union in 1801 resulted in the dissolution of the Irish parliament. Once Dublin had lost its status as capital, the dispersal of the aristocracy and parliamentarians took place very quickly. Membership of the Dublin Society

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<sup>49</sup> Strickland 1913 vol 1: 501.

<sup>50</sup> Bartlett 2004: 81-4.

<sup>51</sup> Hickey 1797, not paginated.

dropped and patronage of the arts was badly affected. The Irish parliament had supported the Society Schools; consequently, with the loss of state aid, the number of pupils enrolled in the Society Schools decreased.<sup>52</sup> One of the few artists to withstand this sudden diminution in patronage was Hamilton, who until his retirement in 1804 was the leading portraitist in the city.

In terms of artistic practice, the Irish art world in the first half of the eighteenth century tended to look outwards to Europe, as is demonstrated by its adoption of a French model of art education. By the latter half of the century the Dublin art world had become inextricably linked with that of London. Irish artists turned towards London both for further training and access to a larger market. Nevertheless, as previously noted, confidence in the development of the fine arts in Dublin led to the construction of the octagonal gallery as a dedicated exhibition space. However, a key difference noted throughout this section between the art worlds of Dublin and London has been the question of scale, the smaller Irish art market being very vulnerable to change. Ambitious artists, such as Hickey, who were unwilling to supplement their fine art practice by employing the full range of skills acquired at the Society Schools, needed wealthy patrons. Driven by economic necessity, Hickey actively sought patronage by travelling to London and thence to Bath in 1776 where he remained until 1780.<sup>53</sup> Moderately successful in Bath, Hickey then set sail for India, seeking further patronage in Calcutta, the commercial centre of British India.

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<sup>52</sup> Willemson 2000: 107, Turpin 1990: 116.

<sup>53</sup> Breeze 1984: 85-93.

## Section Two: Portraiture and Imperial Aesthetics?

This section considers Hickey's early career in Ireland, analysing his work in terms of the conventions of portraiture prevalent in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In addition to discussing his artworks as art *qua* art, his portraits will be considered within the context of Ireland's colonial relationship with England and the wider British Empire. Thus, the images will be analysed not only as primary sources of social, cultural and political knowledge but also in terms of differential hierarchies of power. Furthermore, the extent to which such art contributed to Britain's colonial project or conversely challenged it, will also be addressed. The section concludes with an assessment of the effect on art practice as Britain's trading empire became increasingly one of conquest and territorial expansion. Did the nascent empire have a significant impact on artistic practice; in other words, is there anything to suggest the emergence of imperial aesthetics in the late eighteenth century?

Portraiture was the most popular genre in both eighteenth-century Ireland and Britain. As the century progressed changes occurred in portrait practice both in terms of the demographics of patronage but also in what constituted a 'good' portrait.<sup>54</sup> The scale and diversity of portrait production and circulation in the eighteenth century was enormous, as portraits were made in a wide range of media, from oil paintings, pastels and sculpture to ceramics, embroideries, medals and prints. From the 1750s there had been a rapid acceleration in the commercialisation of British, and to a lesser degree of Irish society. In both, demand for portraits came not only from the aristocracy but also from the middle-classes, who now had both the disposable income and the leisure time to sit for their portrait.<sup>55</sup>

Scholars analysing eighteenth-century fine art portraiture in the context of Britain's changing society, have argued that as portraiture developed throughout the

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<sup>54</sup> For an overview of portrait practice in eighteenth-century Ireland see Figgis (ed.) 2014: 63-7, in England, Solkin 2015: 86-115, 186-210, Pointon 1993 and 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Pointon 1993: 1-9.

century an ideological shift occurred, in that it was no longer adequate just to show the public man; it was often necessary to hint at his private identity as well.<sup>56</sup> Thus art which drew on the antique, or classicism, as it later came to be known, was often tempered in both Ireland and Britain by the culture of sensibility which, amongst other virtues, valued the family, motherhood, oneness with nature and the simple life.<sup>57</sup> Although a constituent part of most late eighteenth-century discourses, as Markman Ellis has argued, the culture of sensibility intersected in a complex manner with what was an increasingly industrialised and commercial society; it eschewed the materialism of commerce, as paradoxically, it was also enabled by it.<sup>58</sup> The significance of the concept of sensibility is that it permitted a society that was increasingly capitalist in orientation, yet anxious concerning the prevalence of self-interest and luxury, to be considered a moral one. Virtue, for example, could be redefined in terms of a collective sentiment of benevolence, as distinct from the type of virtue associated with an individual bound by duty, status or rank.<sup>59</sup> When attempting to express a sitter's sensibility in visual art, more latitude existed in the case of portraits of female subjects who were believed to be innately at one with nature. Furthermore, the main artistic signifiers of sensibility, such as the liquid eye and blushes, tended to be gendered female.<sup>60</sup> Fancy pictures, narrative images and small, 'conversation pieces' were also less constrained by convention.

Irish portrait practice differed from that of Britain however, in that patrons rarely commissioned conversation pieces. In her book, *The Conversation Piece: Making Modern Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2017), Kate Redford highlights the popularity of the sub-genre in England amongst middle class and aristocratic patrons alike.<sup>61</sup> She builds on the scholarship of Anne Crookshank when discussing the lack of interest in conversation pieces amongst patrons in Ireland.<sup>62</sup> Crookshank

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<sup>56</sup> Solkin 2015: 198-207.

<sup>57</sup> For an overview of the concept of sensibility, see Ellis 2004; for discussion concerning sensibility and art practice see essays collected in Bermingham (ed.), 2005 and Rosenthal 1999: 219-46.

<sup>58</sup> Ellis 2004: 134-9.

<sup>59</sup> Ellis 2004: 138. The related concepts of 'sympathy' and 'benevolence' as they pertain to a society increasingly colonial in orientation will be discussed in chapter two.

<sup>60</sup> Pointon 1993: 205, Rosenthal 2004: 563-87.

<sup>61</sup> Redford 2017: 10-12.

<sup>62</sup> Redford 2017: 107-9, Crookshank 1992: 16-20.



maintains that no more than five conversation pieces in oils were painted by Irish artists in the eighteenth century and that those artists who painted them did so in England or further afield; she cites two by Hickey as an example, one made in Bath the other in India, where small narrative portraits were much sought after.<sup>63</sup> In other words, Hickey adapted his Irish practice to the demands of the market as he travelled. Irish artists did produce conversation pieces in the less prestigious media of pastel and watercolour from the 1750s, but this was later than the development of the sub-genre in Britain.<sup>64</sup> This later date may be explained by the fact that in the first half of the century Irish patrons tended to turn towards the Continent in artistic matters.<sup>65</sup> Crookshank, while admitting that the lack of interest in the sub-genre is difficult to explain, suggests that the Irish aristocracy were unwilling to commission conversation pieces as the characteristic informality of such portraits might reveal the 'rough-and-ready social existence to be found in many Irish great houses', opening them to criticism by their English counterparts as merely provincial.<sup>66</sup>

In portraits of male sitters, the need to include the trappings of rank and status tended to make it more difficult for the artist to hint at the private man. Two portraits painted by Hickey within a year of each other illustrate contrasting images of the public man. Moreover, they not only demonstrate Hickey's mastery of the conventions of portraiture but also highlight the use of portraits across the Irish political spectrum. Hickey's earliest known portrait in any medium dates from 1758 when he executed a sketch in black-and-white chalk of Charles Lucas, later Dr Charles Lucas MP (fig. 1.1). An active campaigner for the reform of the Dublin City Assembly, Lucas had to leave Ireland in 1749 to escape imprisonment for sedition.<sup>67</sup> He subsequently trained as a medical practitioner on the Continent, returning to Dublin in 1760 following the reform of the City Assembly along the lines that he had previously advocated. As Lucas was still in exile, Hickey may have been in London

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<sup>63</sup> Crookshank 1992: 17.

<sup>64</sup> Retford 2017: 35-6.

<sup>65</sup> Crookshank 1992: 20.

<sup>66</sup> Crookshank 1992: 19-20.

<sup>67</sup> The Dublin City Assembly, responsible for municipal governance, comprised the Lord Mayor, aldermen, sheriffs and commons, the latter elected by the city guilds. Lucas campaigned for greater powers for the commons.

when the drawing was made, though there is no record to confirm this. Hickey's sketch with its linear style and careful treatment of the sitter's curling hair shows his debt to West's training in the Dublin Society Schools. Around 1770 Hickey made a further portrait of Lucas in oils (fig. 1.2). Economic exigency would have determined the form of the portrait, but the plain background and simple dress of the sitter serve to focus the viewer's attention on Lucas' head. Lucas had been elected to the Irish Parliament in 1761 and had also re-entered civic politics but he wears neither any insignia of office, nor a wig; the informality of his attire befits a man of the people and publisher of the *Citizen's Journal*. Hickey has applied the best of his skill not only to the curls of Lucas' hair but also in illuminating the sitter's face. Light reflects off the white cravat onto the right-side of his face, while the left-side, although in shadow, is carefully back-lit. This gives the portrait a warmth, which, combined with the sitter's resolute expression, suggests both the compassionate medical practitioner and the campaigning politician. Lucas died a year after completion of the portrait, but, such was the public outpouring of grief, the portrait was engraved and ornamented with the sitter's virtues of prudence, fortitude, liberty, justice and physic.<sup>68</sup> Thus, although originally a private commission the image entered the public domain.

On a different scale entirely was the portrait of Viscount Townshend, lord-lieutenant of Ireland (1766-72), commissioned by the Dublin City Assembly in 1769 to mark the passage of the Octennial Act in 1768 (fig. 1.3).<sup>69</sup> The Assembly had stipulated that Townshend should sit to an Irish artist, and, as at the time, Hamilton was in England, Hickey obtained his most prestigious commission to date. At its simplest, the Townshend painting is a commemorative portrait of a public figure but consideration of the site of its display adds another layer of meaning, underlining the formative role of the image in reinforcing differential hierarchies of power. Hickey's painting was displayed as one of a pair with a portrait painted by Reynolds in 1766 of the Earl, (later Duke) of Northumberland, lord-lieutenant of Ireland from 1763-5 (fig. 1.4.). Both are large, full-length portraits with identical Dublin-made rococo giltwood

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<sup>68</sup> Clark 2016: 96.

<sup>69</sup> The Octennial Act provided for the calling of a new Irish parliament every eight years which for the first time guaranteed regular elections. Beckett 1969: 201-3.

frames. No distinct vice-regal iconography existed so both men are dressed according to their English rank: Townshend in his peer's robes, Northumberland in the robes and regalia of the Order of the Knights of the Garter. In contrast to the Lucas portrait, the spectator is encouraged to focus on the sitters' elaborate costumes and signifiers of status. There is no suggestion of the private man. Vice-regal portraits were more usually paid for by the sitter and displayed in Dublin Castle. Political expediency played a large part in the Assembly's decision to commission the Hickey portrait; it hoped to garner support from Townshend in the on-going campaign for trading concessions from Britain. The Assembly then displayed the portrait alongside that of Northumberland in Dublin's Mansion House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin since 1715. These were the first portraits to be hung in the Mansion House; no official mayoral portraits were commissioned until 1792.<sup>70</sup> Thus the British king's representatives in Ireland dominated this civic space underlining where the real power in Dublin lay.<sup>71</sup>

Happenstance may have played a part in Hickey winning such a prestigious commission but the Townshend portrait, displayed alongside one painted by Reynolds, not only underlines Hickey's ability to paint a grand manner portrait but also the ambitious, public nature of his artistic aspirations. However, unable to build on the opportunity afforded by the commission, Hickey travelled to England, working in London and then in Bath, before setting sail for India in 1780.

In his subsequent portrayal of colonial life in India, Hickey did not bring an 'innocent eye' to bear on his new subjects; he was conditioned in his response to new people and places by contemporary conventions of Western art practice. Indeed, he expressed a conventional view of the superiority of European forms of representation when, on his return from China, as first painter with the Macartney Embassy (1792-4), he wrote of his

hope of exhibiting to the Chinese judgement proof of the advancements made in the arts from their cultivation in England and on that ground of

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<sup>70</sup> Clark 2016: 62.

<sup>71</sup> See also introduction, p.29 and chapter four, pp.135-6 for an analysis of how the serial display of portraits of powerful men could reinforce hierarchies of power and colonial domination.

characteristic truth and fidelity of imitation I formed the expectation, on my return also, to bring home such testimonials of identical representation of things in that country as might prove satisfactory to the inquisitive observer and do credit to my exertions.<sup>72</sup>

Hickey worked in Ireland and England in the aftermath of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) when Britain began, increasingly, to look outwards. Voyages of both exploration and trade resulted in the importation of a vast array of goods, which included objects of visual interest such as costumes, textiles, paintings and ceramics, that excited much interest. This section, therefore, concludes by considering whether there is any suggestion of an emerging imperial aesthetic in the last quarter of the eighteenth century: firstly, in terms of a possible stylistic response by artists to non-Western material goods, secondly, in terms of the emergence of a celebratory or triumphal imperial aesthetic as witnessed in the nineteenth century, either of which may have influenced travelling artists' approach to their new subjects.

Natasha Eaton has argued that metropolitan artists were compelled to engage with non-Western art forms, such an engagement constituting a challenge to the dominance of classicism, institutionalised and reinforced as a dominant aesthetic by the Royal Academy and Reynolds' *Discourses*. Eaton focuses on the exotic, which, she argues, was transformed into 'a modern British Imperial aesthetic'.<sup>73</sup> Following Robert Porter's work on chinoiserie, she conceptualises the 'exotic' as a 'volatile aesthetic' which, in the eighteenth century, was thought to occupy a liminal zone between home and the foreign.<sup>74</sup> Such claims concerning the exotic resonate with Said's discussion of the Orient's unstable status within the Western imagination caught 'between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in - or fear of - novelty'.<sup>75</sup> The exotic may have been an unstable Eurocentric aesthetic underpinned by cultural misunderstanding and misrecognition, but it had both longevity and capaciousness: different peoples, man-made artefacts both old

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<sup>72</sup> Hickey 1797: not paginated.

<sup>73</sup> Eaton 2013: 21-22.

<sup>74</sup> Porter 2002: 395-411, Eaton 2013: 23.

<sup>75</sup> Said 2003: 59.

and new, flora and fauna; from China, India, the Pacific islands and the edges of Europe including Turkey and Moorish Spain were all considered within its terms.

If, as Eaton argues, the exotic posed a real challenge to academic norms, it may have contributed to how Hickey both imagined and represented subjects he encountered in India and China. One way to explore the exotic with a view to assessing whether it did in fact come to constitute an imperial aesthetic is to consider the widespread eighteenth-century interest in China. England traded with China in tea, silk and porcelain and as a result developed a taste for chinoiserie.<sup>76</sup> Chinese-themed wallpaper (often known as India paper), lacquerware, porcelain, costumes for masquerades and the theatre all fulfilled a desire for the exotic. However, much of what was known about China in both Ireland and Britain was second-hand knowledge. The East India Company, in a similar manner to other European trading companies, was only permitted by the Chinese to trade through Canton and then for a limited period each year.<sup>77</sup> What is at issue in deciding if a fascination for the exotic amounts to a fully-fledged 'imperial aesthetic', is whether the interest in chinoiserie was mainly due to its novelty value and to changing fashion, or whether there was any significant intellectual or aesthetic engagement in Ireland or Britain with Chinese art and culture, such as might be comparable to the European Enlightenment interest in Confucianism as a different belief system.<sup>78</sup>

It was unusual for Western artists to assimilate Chinese styles into their work as Chinese art was perceived as artificial and unnatural. If they did, it merely served to open them to criticism from European academics and connoisseurs wedded to classicism as an absolute standard. Practitioners of the fine arts may have been loath to incorporate technical elements of Chinese art practice into their work, but by contrast, in both Ireland and Britain, the demand for all things Chinese within the decorative arts was enormous. In and around 1750, Joseph Leeson, Earl of Milltown an Irish peer and politician, commissioned a mirror with an elaborate and richly gilded frame for Russborough House (fig. 1.5). The mirror is bordered by two classical

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<sup>76</sup> Hevia 1995: 68, Porter 2002: 396.

<sup>77</sup> Murray 2013: 119-120, Hevia 1995: 57-60.

<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of European interest in Confucianism see Hevia 1995: 68-69.

pillars but the bulk of the frame is not only decorated with Chinese heads and pagodas, a pair of dragons, a dove and naturalistic flowers but also employs a range of rococo motifs including c-curves and scrolls. Thus Ireland, China and France were linked through the mediation of chinoiserie. Moreover, such was the pervasive nature of chinoiserie, its motifs were not limited to luxury goods. Items decorated with Chinese designs ranged from Dublin delftware to the fretwork of service staircases in some Dublin townhouses. Items specifically aimed at the Western market were manufactured in Canton whilst European-based artists also met the demand for 'authentic' Chinese objects.<sup>79</sup> Material goods associated with chinoiserie may be considered hybrid products. However, chinoiserie was not only tightly linked to the world of commerce, trade and the decorative arts but also to the sensuality and allure of the theatre. In addition, it was for the most part, gendered feminine.<sup>80</sup> Women bought chinoiserie. Porcelain, for example, was associated with feminine spaces and with the ritual of tea drinking. Moreover, within the literary genre of social critique, satirising of a taste for the exotic often featured a woman.<sup>81</sup>

China and India were often elided in the latter half of the eighteenth century, resulting in a fabricated, or as Said put it, 'floating' sense of the Orient.<sup>82</sup> Slippage between the terms 'exotic' and 'oriental' meant this indeterminate sense also included Turkey and Moorish Spain. In her novel *The Absentee* (1812) the Anglo-Irish author Maria Edgeworth satirises the fashion for all things 'oriental' in a devastating criticism of excess and social climbing through the display of the exotic. Edgeworth describes a gala held by her fictional Lady Clonbrony thus:

The opening of her gala, the display of her splendid reception rooms, the Turkish tent, the Alhambra, the pagoda formed a proud moment to lady Clonbrony....her ladyship went gliding about – most importantly busy, introducing my *lady* this to the sphinx candelabra, and my *lady* that to the Trebisonde trellice; placing some delightfully for the perspective of the

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<sup>79</sup> Figgis (ed) 2014: 262. For a discussion of the Irish artist Thomas Frye and his production of 'Chinese' porcelain.

<sup>80</sup> Porter 2002: 403-7.

<sup>81</sup> See Maria Edgeworth and her fictional Lady Clonbrony as discussed below.

<sup>82</sup> Said: 2003: 118-19.

Alhambra; establishing others quite to her satisfaction on seraglio ottomans...imagining herself the mirror of fashion, and the admiration of the whole world, lady Clonbrony was, for her hour, as happy certainly as ever woman was in similar circumstances.<sup>83</sup>

Edgeworth's book not only presented a social critique but also had a political dimension in its condemnation of absenteeism on the part of English landlords in Ireland. Edgeworth also highlights the differential relationship between the English and Anglo-Irish aristocracy, the former considering the latter their social inferior.<sup>84</sup> The Anglo-Irish Lady Clonbrony is 'othered' by her English counterparts, not only by virtue of her accent but also through her display of the exotic.

So far, the analysis of the exotic, and more specifically that of chinoiserie, has suggested on the one hand an interest based on the desire to possess the fashionable and, on the other, curiosity as regards the East. There is nothing to suggest an aesthetic response in Western fine art practice to the exotic. However, as she develops her argument, Eaton turns to India, considering Mughal miniatures and glass paintings whose increasing presence on the high-end London market in the 1770s and 1780s she believes posed a real challenge to the ubiquity of classical values as a cultural norm.<sup>85</sup> European interest in Mughal miniatures was not new. From the 1770s, however, as the interests of the East India Company in India expanded, they began to appear in the London marketplace, often as a consequence of looting and prizes.<sup>86</sup> Mughal miniatures were collected in England by those who had travelled and worked in India, for example Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, but also by arbiters of public taste such as Reynolds.<sup>87</sup> Eaton argues that Reynolds had to pay attention to Indian art; that he 'prescribed the manner in which British artists must

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<sup>83</sup> Edgeworth 1999: 26.

<sup>84</sup> Edgeworth 1999: 1-5. This differential relationship is also referred to above in Crookshank's suggestion that the Anglo-Irish aristocracy were loath to commission conversation pieces as such images of Irish interiors could expose them to ridicule by their English counterparts. See pp 51-2.

<sup>85</sup> It is difficult to quantify the number of Mughal miniatures on the market as the word 'India' was used very loosely in this period to mean anything imported by the East India Company.

<sup>86</sup> Such miniatures were originally preserved in albums but these were often dismantled and images sold as single items.

<sup>87</sup> Eaton 2006: 243.

demote the rarity status of Indian art.<sup>88</sup> Whilst there is no doubt that Reynolds was aware of Indian, specifically Mughal art, and counted amongst his patrons servants of the East India Company, there is however little in the *Discourses* to support the claim that he engaged in any thoroughly considered way with Indian art. Eaton appears to suggest that by institutionalising and tolerating exotic non-Western art Reynolds, as it were, neutralised any challenge to European, academic norms and by so doing, plotted a course between the exotic and the imperial creating a modern British aesthetic that was in Eaton's words, both, 'celebratory' and 'aggressive' in its endorsement of empire.<sup>89</sup>

Conversely, it could be argued that Reynolds does not appear to view Eastern art as a potential threat to classical norms; rather, he acknowledges the usefulness of art from all ages and places, that the formation of the 'perfect idea' may be enabled by attention to it.<sup>90</sup> Thus in *Discourse VI* (1774) Reynolds described what he meant by a great artist:

Like a sovereign judge and arbiter of art, he is possessed of that presiding power which separates and attracts every excellence from every school; selects both from what is great and what is little; brings home knowledge from the East and from the West; making the universe tributary towards furnishing his mind and enriching his works with originality and variety of inventions.<sup>91</sup>

Reynolds' focus is on the universal ideal but given both the historical and institutional context, it is possible to consider his remarks as orientalist in the Saidean sense. He links power with the selection, control and drawing in of useful knowledge, which, in its turn facilitates the artist's active representation of a constructed reality. Furthermore, whilst Reynolds names the various Western schools, Flemish, Venetian and French, he does not distinguish those of the East.<sup>92</sup> That is to say, he homogenises the East. However, for a commentator who is usually prescriptive,

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<sup>88</sup> Eaton 2006: 244.

<sup>89</sup> Eaton 2013: 57.

<sup>90</sup> Reynolds 1990: 170.

<sup>91</sup> Reynolds 1990: 170.

<sup>92</sup> Said 2003: 2-4, 113-23.



Reynolds is curiously vague as to how the artist should actually profit from Eastern art. In *Discourse VII* (1776), he makes comparisons between Eastern and Western taste that imply, at least in part, that Eastern art is overblown while peoples of the East are unaware of their excesses since they consider classical simplicity to be dull:

What is approved of in the eastern nations as grand and majestic, would be considered by the Greeks and Romans as turgid and inflated; and they, in return; would be thought by the Orientals to express themselves in a cold and insipid manner.<sup>93</sup>

However, the only specific reference that Reynolds makes to Indian art or rather, in fact to Indian architecture, is in *Discourse XIII* (1786) when he briefly mentions the ‘Barbarick splendour of those Asiatick Buildings, which are now published by a member of the Academy’ and which he believes offer ‘hints of composition and general effects’ to an architect.<sup>94</sup> Reynolds is referring here to the landscape artist William Hodges (1744-97), who was active in India from 1780-3. Reynolds is not interested in Indian architecture on its own terms but rather, underlines the potential usefulness of knowledge of its designs to Western architects.

One final institutional context within which paintings of imperial subjects should be analysed is the exhibition space. Scholars, such as Eleanor Hughes, have drawn attention to the importance of exhibition spaces such as those of the Royal Academy in encouraging the viewing public to imagine themselves as subjects of an imperial nation. Eaton notes an increase in the number of paintings of imperial subjects exhibited at the Academy throughout the 1770s.<sup>95</sup> (These would have been seen by Hickey who, as noted above, exhibited regularly in the Royal Academy from 1771 to 1776) However, it is to overstate the case when she suggests that Reynolds had to acknowledge that ‘imperial subjects were becoming central to the Academy’s exhibitionary agenda’.<sup>96</sup> As Hughes, has argued, the significance lies in the

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<sup>93</sup> Reynolds 1990: 196.

<sup>94</sup> Reynolds 1990: 297.

<sup>95</sup> Eaton 2013: 256. ‘in 1760 [*sic*] there were seven; 1770, five; 1771, only one; 1772, three; 1773, two; 1774, one; 1775, three; and 1776 as many as eleven’. Eaton does not indicate subject matter; if compared with Hughes’ figures for 1770s to 1780s for marine paintings, Eaton’s figures are conservative. Hughes 2007: 140.

<sup>96</sup> Eaton 2013:56.

juxtaposition of paintings of imperial subjects (Hughes discusses maritime paintings but Hodges' Indian views could equally be included), with English landscape, coastal views and portraits of noteworthy Britons; this kind of juxtaposition in its turn encouraged the viewing public to consider Britain both in terms of domestic and overseas interests.<sup>97</sup> This is a crucial point as it underlines the constitutive role of late-eighteenth century British art practice in the construction of a national identity increasingly predicated on the mutuality of nation and empire.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, however important the constructive role of art practice may have been, it does not add up to a specifically imperial aesthetic operative in British art in the late eighteenth century.

Said has suggested that the eighteenth century was a time marked by flexibility and possibility, when Western intuitions of the Orient and the Oriental had a 'chameleonlike quality'.<sup>99</sup> A free floating sense of different places and the emotions they evoked helps to explain why it is difficult to pin down the notion of an imperial aesthetic in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>100</sup> Insofar as there was an aesthetic response to the 'exotic' in Ireland or Britain it was largely defined by curiosity. Britain had lost its American colonies in 1782 while its activities in India were becoming increasingly colonial in orientation; society's response to empire tended to oscillate between one of celebration and conversely, one of anxiety.<sup>101</sup> However, as will be shown in later chapters, particularly when comparing and contrasting the portraits Hickey painted during his long career in India, a distinct triumphalist approach had begun to emerge in British art by the start of the nineteenth century; by the time Nicholl left Ireland for Ceylon, it was well established.

The above analysis of Hickey's early work in Ireland is significant in that it not only discusses his Irish images in terms of Ireland's colonial relationship with England but also situates his work within the wider context of the British Empire. It

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<sup>97</sup> Hughes 2007:139-52.

<sup>98</sup> See also Quilley who draws attention to the mutuality of nation and empire, Quilley 2011: 11-12.

<sup>99</sup> Said 2003: 119.

<sup>100</sup> Said: 2003: 118-9.

<sup>101</sup> A common belief at the time, reinforced by the publication of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in 1776, was that an Empire's rise was inevitably followed by a fall.

demonstrates how art may be used to both further and, alternatively, challenge the imperial project. Furthermore, it is important to understand the visual vocabulary available to him because it is only by understanding the artistic conventions Hickey brought to his Indian subjects that such images may be interpreted in a significant manner; as for example, in terms of differential relations of power.

### Section Three: Irishness and Networks of Patronage

The importance or otherwise of Hickey's 'Irishness' will be addressed in this section. The following analysis will not suggest that 'Irishness' indicates a specific, Irish sensibility but rather will consider what it meant to be Irish in the eighteenth century not only as a marker of difference but also in practical terms, for example in terms of social and spatial mobility. The question of Hickey's ethnicity is relevant not only as he moved through the wider empire to India but also as he lived and worked in London and Bath. Were the Irish in London, for example, considered merely provincial rather than of a different nationality? The demographics of the Irish middle class in London in the last quarter of the eighteenth century have been studied by Craig Bailey who came to the conclusion that Irish identity had a distinct operative value of its own.<sup>102</sup> Such identity depended on affiliations of kinship, locality, religion and a sense of being Irish abroad.<sup>103</sup> This section will begin by considering the question of identity in relation to broad theoretical works. In order to evaluate Bailey's work on the Irish in particular, Hickey's connection to an Irish transnational network of patronage will then be explored.

Identity, for all its ubiquity in contemporary theory, is a complex concept which is difficult to discuss when abstracted from particular contexts and even more so at a temporal remove. In the eighteenth century, the use of the concept of 'nation' as a way of defining peoples became increasingly important. Distinct from previously

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<sup>102</sup> Bailey 2013: 6-17.

<sup>103</sup> Bailey 2013: 166-77.

operative understandings of the concept of nation in biblical or juridical terms, a new sense of the nation as a political, territorial entity began to emerge. Knowledge gained from voyages of exploration and imperial expansion shaped a nascent sense of national identity in Britain.<sup>104</sup> Comparisons were made not only with other European countries competing for territories overseas but also with peoples of the wider world. Differential comparisons made with other parts of the world underlined the specificity, and frequently the supposed superiority of the 'home' nation. However, a difficulty faced when considering eighteenth-century identity-formation is how to reconcile the widespread eighteenth-century belief in an irreducible essence of national character and the individual on the one hand, with on the other hand, the demand that has come increasingly to inform modern scholarship today that identity be understood as largely contingent and relative, as performed within a variety of contexts.

As Benedict Anderson has shown in his influential work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), 'print-capitalism' facilitated the development of a national consciousness in this period.<sup>105</sup> Anderson proposes that cultural forms such as the novel, newspapers and periodicals, all of which were printed in the vernacular and widely distributed by the latter half of the eighteenth century, facilitated the imagining of the abstract simultaneity of the national community.<sup>106</sup> The importance of Anderson's imagined community of the nation to the present thesis is that it draws attention to the formative role of cultural representation in the construction of a national consciousness or identity. He discusses the written word but visual representation be it fine art, prints or graphic satire must also be considered. As will be highlighted in chapter four, scholars in Ireland in the 1830s, for example, developed a sense of a distinct Irish identity, albeit within the British Empire, through the validation of Ireland's historic landscape and its culture in prints and drawings.<sup>107</sup> Anderson discusses the nation as 'an imagined political community – imagined as both

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<sup>104</sup> Nechtman 2013:5-9, Crosbie 2012: 3-17, Wilson 2003: 1-29.

<sup>105</sup> Anderson 2006: 5-6.

<sup>106</sup> Anderson 2006: 24.

<sup>107</sup> Chapter four pp.174-77.

inherently limited and sovereign'.<sup>108</sup> This unitary approach becomes problematic when differences within nations, including Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland are erased. Each country becomes homogenised and internal, complex, regional differences that were important in the eighteenth century, are ignored. Conversely similarities, particularly in border regions, are glossed over. Transposed to the colonies, other peoples are likewise homogenised.

More recently however, scholars have developed Anderson's work in different directions. Kathleen Wilson, for example, in *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the eighteenth century* (2003) departs from Anderson in that she conceptualises both personal and collective identity in terms of the state of being different rather than similar.<sup>109</sup> Wilson makes a crucial point, pertinent to discussions of Hickey's self-determination through actively seeking patronage, when she argues that individual identity was determined in part by where one was placed within differing social groupings, but was also dependent to a degree on where one placed oneself. Thus, through individual agency social mobility was possible.<sup>110</sup> She suggests that the differential relationship between individuals and social groups was mediated in terms of religion, politics, geography, sociability as well as class, gender, race and nationality.<sup>111</sup> Of further relevance, not only to Hickey but also to Nicholl, is Wilson's argument that, through the study of representation, identity formation may be understood as a historical process. She suggests that by examining how people are positioned within dominant regimes of representation, competing ideas of difference and belonging in relation to nation, ethnicity and empire, at a given moment, may be explored.<sup>112</sup> Wilson's focus is mainly on written texts but visual art must also be considered, particularly given that artists like Hickey and Nicholl travelled overseas representing different peoples and places within, what were, external conventions of Western art practice.

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<sup>108</sup> Anderson 2006: 5-6.

<sup>109</sup> Wilson 2003: 2-3.

<sup>110</sup> Wilson 2003: 3.

<sup>111</sup> Wilson 2003: 3.

<sup>112</sup> Wilson 2003: 4. See also Bhabha 2010: 199-244.

A complicating factor in the discussion of emerging senses of national identity in the eighteenth century is the concept of Britishness, which was believed to transcend the internal differences of the four 'home' nations by encouraging the various countries to focus on what they had in common in comparison to external lands: for example Protestant Britain as opposed to Catholic Europe, particularly France.<sup>113</sup> In this making of differential comparisons the position of Ireland was ambiguous. Not only was Ireland geographically and, until 1801, constitutionally distinct from Britain, but the majority of its population was Catholic. Wilson argues that a three-nation sense of Britishness, excluding Ireland, developed.<sup>114</sup> Britishness itself however was a fragile concept, used interchangeably with Englishness.<sup>115</sup> Different again was the question of the colonial Briton. Scholars contributing to a collection of essays, *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas* (2010), have studied a cross-section of British communities overseas, drawing out on the one hand the particularities of different places and times while highlighting on the other, a commonality shared by overseas Britons: the perception that they were somehow different from 'home' Britons who, in their turn, perceived overseas Britons as different.<sup>116</sup> In terms of an overarching colonial identity in eighteenth century British India, slippage between Britishness, colonial Britishness and Englishness undoubtedly occurred. David Washbrook, writing about eighteenth-century Calcutta, however, also underlines the operational importance of specific ethnicities, including that of the Scottish and Irish.<sup>117</sup> This distinction is relevant when considering the importance of ethnicity to Hickey in seeking patronage in British India.

Eighteenth-century concepts of identity are both complex and abstract; how then to understand Irishness, in a concrete manner in the context of the British Empire; as Irish artists worked and moved through its territories did their Irishness

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<sup>113</sup> Colley 1992: 315-16.

<sup>114</sup> Wilson 2003: 11.

<sup>115</sup> Nechtman 2010: 6, 19, Wilson 2003: 13,17-18.

<sup>116</sup> Bickers 2010: 9.

<sup>117</sup> Washbrook 2010: 178-204.

even matter? One way to begin is to consider networks of patronage.<sup>118</sup> Networks of patronage have increasingly come to be seen as fundamental to an understanding of eighteenth-century society. Both Bailey as mentioned above, and Barry Crosbie have studied Irish transnational networks of patronage which linked Ireland, London, the Caribbean and southern Asia.<sup>119</sup> In the eighteenth century to act as a patron indicated both financial and social success. It also involved an element of risk, not only in financial terms but also in respect of the patron's reputation. Networks of patronage were based on a mutual sense of obligation, responsibility and trust, the latter being particularly important in the imperial context where communication was poor and the rule of imperial law difficult to enforce. In small groupings the participants were often linked by ties of kinship. In larger networks, as well as those that involved the participants in multiple journeys throughout the Empire, ethnicity also played a part.

Bailey has analysed a fragment of an Irish network of patronage based on the legal profession in London. Centred on the Bourke, Burke and Hickey families this network depended on bonds both of kinship and ethnicity.<sup>120</sup> However, the network was not confined to the legal profession. It had close ties to the East India Company through the Company's Cork-born director Laurence Sullivan and also reached into diplomatic circles through George, later Earl Macartney, who came from Co. Antrim.<sup>121</sup> In addition it embraced Irish writers and artists. The network was not a closed system and included such influential English figures as Reynolds amongst its contacts. While Edmund Burke's sponsorship of James Barry is well known, other artists who benefitted from association with the network included George Barret (c.1732-84), John and Thomas Hickey and Martin Archer Shee (1769-1850).<sup>122</sup> The

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<sup>118</sup> Parts of this discussion concerning Irish networks of patronage were previously published in McDermott 2016.

<sup>119</sup> Bailey 2005, Bailey 2013, Crosbie 2012.

<sup>120</sup> John Bourke the father of William Burke - William Burke changed the spelling of his name which was not uncommon in the eighteenth century - was the patron of Edmund Burke and also of Joseph Hickey. The son of Joseph Hickey, William Hickey subsequently worked as an attorney in Calcutta. The legal family of Hickeys was not related to the artists Thomas and John Hickey.

<sup>121</sup> Bailey 2005: 168, Crosbie 2012: 44-57. William Hickey on meeting Macartney in Madras records in his diary how he was a fellow collegian of Dublin University with his father. He also notes how his father settled a debt for Macartney allowing the latter to take up an earlier posting in St. Petersburg. Hickey Vol III 1948: 96.

<sup>122</sup> Bailey 2005: 168-9.

benefits accrued through association with the network are exemplified by the career trajectory of Shee. With the encouragement of both Burke and Reynolds, Shee, though a Catholic, progressed rapidly through the ranks of the Royal Academy, ultimately becoming its president in 1830. Participants also belonged to the Literary Club, founded in 1764, the original members of which included Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Burke and Reynolds. Membership expanded to include amongst others, David Garrick and James Boswell in 1773, Edward Gibbon in 1774, Adam Smith and William Jones in 1775 and Sir Joseph Banks in 1778.<sup>123</sup> The club was characterised by its diverse membership: members, for the most part middle class intellectuals, were known for their informed conversation.<sup>124</sup>

A characteristic of the network under discussion was its flexibility and dynamism: it survived and extended over space and time, linking Ireland, London, Southern Asia and China. It may be usefully conceptualised in terms of what Bruno Latour has described as the 'continuously local'.<sup>125</sup> Small, local connections were made and remade; for example, Trinity College in Dublin and the Middle Temple in London were important structuring institutions. These connections, were then mapped onto a series of interconnecting, transnational commercial networks, including those of the East India Company, through which people, goods, capital, and ideas moved.<sup>126</sup> In the latter half of the eighteenth century, these commercial networks were increasingly associated with imperialism and its regimes of power. New routes were grafted onto old and henceforth movements became a mixture of the commercial, diplomatic, political and military. Movement was not unidirectional and linear; it may have been uneven and influenced by differing hierarchies of power, but it was multi directional.<sup>127</sup> From Latour's perspective each participant in a network actively contributes to the formation of a context, rather than operating within an imposed framework. By following the displacements and movements to

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<sup>123</sup> Reynolds 1990: 359-61.

<sup>124</sup> Hevia 1995: 64.

<sup>125</sup> Latour 2007: 180-188, Latour 1998 not paginated.

<sup>126</sup> Nash 2000: 13-41, Ogborn 2008: 2-6.

<sup>127</sup> Nash 2000: 2-23, Ogborn 2008: 78-100.



and from within the network, as well as what it transports, it is possible to understand the importance of the local in constituting the global.<sup>128</sup>

Latour's theories clearly have implications for artists and artworks as they are articulated across networks of artistic patronage linking peripheral sites and the metropole. Such a perspective helps to show how art practice may be understood as actively context-forming, rather than a merely passive addendum to social and political histories of the British Empire. One potential criticism of the use of Latour's model in the analysis of eighteenth-century networks of patronage is that its 'horizontal' does not account for the 'verticality' of Georgian society as expressed through its insistent social hierarchies. However, he does suggest that the strength of a network lies in its 'connectedness'.<sup>129</sup> Likewise, Crosbie, taking a different, yet in this instance complementary theoretical approach which does permit discussion of social hierarchies, has highlighted the importance of social capital, 'through the writing of letters of introduction, recommending and nominating each other's relatives for position', in determining the type of people who travelled to and subsequently held important positions in India.<sup>130</sup> Some, particularly in the case of Scottish artists, came from high ranking families with good connections in India. The Scottish miniaturist Catherine Read (1723-1778) came from an aristocratic family; George Willison's (1741-1797) uncle was a Company Director; and Charles Smith's (1749-1824) uncle was Caleb Whitefoord, a well-known Scottish patron of the Arts.<sup>131</sup>

As previously noted, the Irish network was based on ethnicity as well as kinship. Furthermore, participants in the network under discussion were, for the most part, men of 'middling' rank. Thus, the mobilisation of shared resources and collective agency allowed these self-made men to prosper and overcome potential social barriers. Hickey provides a case in point. He had an academic training and was moderately successful in Dublin, London and Bath, but came from a modest background and had no family connections in London or India. Therefore, his sponsors associated with the Irish network of patronage were of great importance.

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<sup>128</sup> Latour 2007: 204.

<sup>129</sup> Latour 2007: 176, 178-79.

<sup>130</sup> Crosbie 2013: 49.

<sup>131</sup> See Archer, 1979 and Eaton 2013: 254 for artists' backgrounds.

With Reynolds' support, Hickey petitioned the East India Company in January 1779 for permission to travel to India. This was granted on 26 March 1780 and on 27 July 1780 Hickey left Portsmouth for India on board the *Royal George*, one of five East Indiamen travelling in a large convoy of sixty three merchantmen.<sup>132</sup> His journey was not without adventure; the convoy was attacked and captured by a combined French and Spanish fleet, but as a civilian, Hickey gained permission to disembark at Cadiz, whence he proceeded overland to Lisbon.<sup>133</sup> He then spent three profitable years as a portraitist in Portugal before finally leaving for India in late 1783. Hickey arrived in Calcutta in March 1784 bearing letters of recommendation, he had obtained from Reynolds on 6 July 1780, addressed to Governor-General Warren Hastings. Reynolds wrote:

Mr Hickey who is the bearer of this, is a very ingenious young painter who from seeing the success that has attended others, who, with certainly not higher pretensions, have made fortunes by their profession in India, wishes to make a trial of his own abilities.<sup>134</sup>

Unfortunately, Hastings at this point was preparing to return to England and Calcutta was also in the grip of a recession. Moreover, artworks by artists resident in Britain were now being sent for sale in Calcutta and prints, drawings and paintings were also being re-cycled in the local bazaars.<sup>135</sup> Hickey was therefore competing in a contracting market with other European artists. Nevertheless, he was initially busy, receiving patronage and commissions from the diarist and lawyer, William Hickey, from William Burke, who had come to India in 1779 as deputy paymaster general to the Royal Army, and from the extended Sullivan family and its associates.

By January 1791, Hickey was struggling to maintain a viable practice as the commercial nature of Calcutta changed, reducing the number of his potential patrons.<sup>136</sup> He decided to leave India and set sail for England, returning to London in

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<sup>132</sup> The other East Indiamen were the *Gatton*, the *Godfrey*, the *Mountstuart* and the *Hillsborough*.

<sup>133</sup> In a letter dated 1797 Hickey states that he disembarked at Xeres. Hickey 1797, not paginated.

<sup>134</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds 1780, quoted in Archer 1979: 206.

<sup>135</sup> Eaton 2003: 46-74.

<sup>136</sup> These changes will be discussed in chapter two, pp.103-4.

June of that year, 'not overburthened with riches', as William Hickey put it.<sup>137</sup> Hickey had difficulty finding work and by 8 February 1792 he had applied for, and received permission from, the East India Company to return to India.<sup>138</sup> However, on 3 May 1792 his countryman Lord Macartney received an appointment as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China.<sup>139</sup> Macartney was allowed to select the civilian personnel travelling with the Embassy and offered Hickey the position of portrait painter at a salary of £200 per annum, a post that was more financially secure than trying his luck once again in India.<sup>140</sup>

Macartney had been Governor of Madras from 1781-1785.<sup>141</sup> However, since Hickey's arrival in India and Macartney's departure from Madras overlapped, it is most probable that the two men had met previously in Dublin or latterly in London. Macartney took his seat in the Irish Parliament as the Member for Armagh in 1768 and was later nominated as Chief Secretary for Ireland by Viscount Townshend, serving in this role from 1769 to 1772. He must have been aware of Hickey's portrait of Townshend painted in 1769, and perhaps the more modest one of Dr Charles Lucas MP made in 1770, both discussed above. In 1792, Hickey exhibited a painting entitled *Portrait of a Gentleman* at the Royal Academy which is believed to have been the three-quarter length portrait of Macartney that was engraved by John Hall in 1796 and reproduced as the frontispiece to Volume II of Sir George Staunton's account of the Embassy (fig. 1.6).<sup>142</sup> Macartney had close links to the Irish transnational network of patronage; he owed his appointment as Governor of Madras to the support of Laurence Sullivan and his faction within the East India Company.<sup>143</sup> Not only did William Hickey call on him in Madras but correspondence from Macartney's time in India shows that he was in constant contact with William Burke and the extended

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<sup>137</sup> Hickey Vol III 1948: 22.

<sup>138</sup> Archer 1979: 218.

<sup>139</sup> Macartney 1950: vii.

<sup>140</sup> Barrow 1807: 344, Cranmer-Byng 1962: 314.

<sup>141</sup> Macartney was an experienced diplomat. He had served variously as Ambassador to the Court of Catherine the Great in St Petersburg (1764-67), as Chief Secretary for Ireland (1769-72) and as Governor General of the British West Indies (1775-79). Macartney 1950: vii, Gillingham 1993: 29.

<sup>142</sup> Archer 1979: 218, Figgis and Rooney 2001:202. A second 'kit-kat' version of this painting is held in the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art.

<sup>143</sup> Fraser 1996: 79-80.

Sullivan family in India and also with the Burkes in London.<sup>144</sup> This connection with the network and its associates was reinforced on his return to London when Macartney was elected a member of the Literary Club in 1786.<sup>145</sup> It is entirely probable that Hickey owed his appointment to his involvement with the Irish network. As Sir John Barrow, comptroller to the Embassy household wrote in his autobiographical memoir:

Mr Hickey, an indifferent portrait-painter, was a countryman of Lord Macartney, whose portrait he had painted; and being now out of employment, his Lordship, it was said, took him out of compassion; I believe he executed nothing whatever while on the embassy, but in conversation he was a shrewd, clever man.<sup>146</sup>

To describe Hickey as an 'indifferent portrait-painter' is surely contradicted by the fact that Reynolds, the pre-eminent figure in the London art world, not only supported Hickey's original application to travel to India, but also wrote a personal recommendation to Hastings. Reynolds would have been unlikely to compromise his own reputation by offering patronage to someone who was not worthy of it. Staunton, the secretary to the Embassy and Macartney's *de facto* second in command, was also an Irishman with close connections to the network under discussion.<sup>147</sup> Resentment at Macartney's patronage of his compatriots or simple prejudice against the Irish may have fuelled Barrow's remarks.

Nevertheless, Barrow was correct in that Hickey did indeed produce very few paintings, only two of which were figure studies of the Chinese: a colour wash drawing of Chinese sightseers gathered to see a boat of the Embassy and a portrait of the mandarin Van-ta-gin who accompanied the Embassy throughout its time in

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<sup>144</sup> Hickey Vol III 1948: 96. Macartney 1950: 1-229.

<sup>145</sup> Cranmer-Byng 1962: 17.

<sup>146</sup> Barrow 1847: 49.

<sup>147</sup> Staunton was from Galway; a member of the Royal Society and Doctor of Laws from Oxford University. A friend of Joseph Hickey, lawyer and father of the diarist William Hickey, he had served as Macartney's secretary in India. When Macartney became embroiled in the controversy surrounding the Nawab of Arcot's debts, Edmund Burke defended him in Parliament, in a speech based on information provided by Staunton. Fraser 1996: 80.

China.<sup>148</sup> Van-ta-gin was a high ranking military officer at the Chinese imperial court; the fact that Hickey was afforded access to him and the time to paint an oil portrait not only underlines the sitter's rank but also Hickey's standing within Macartney's retinue. The original is lost but Hickey's portrait of Van-ta-gin was engraved by Medland and served as the frontispiece to Barrow's *Travels in China* (1804) (fig. 1.7). Even in the engraving, Hickey's love of contrasting textures may be appreciated: the teased-out filaments of the peacock feather, the firm ribbed bonnet, the silky jacket and contrasting string of beads. Indicators of Van-ta-gin's rank include the coral bead and peacock feather attached to his bonnet, long ceremonial necklace and the elaborately embroidered, silk square attached to his jacket.<sup>149</sup> Few paintings of elite Chinese were made.<sup>150</sup> Neither Hickey nor William Alexander, the draughtsman attached to the Embassy, were allowed to attend Macartney's audience with the Chinese emperor; all images of the audience derive from sketches by Lieutenant Henry Parish, a member of Macartney's suite. Hickey also executed a series of small, modest watercolour sketches whilst on board ship.<sup>151</sup> Hitherto not widely known, they comprise coastal views of Brazil, Tenerife and Tristan da Cunha taken on the outward and inward voyages (fig. 1.8). Staunton wrote that Hickey had set out to paint some landscape views whilst the Embassy was docked in Tenerife, but had been thwarted by bad weather: none of these views are known to have survived.<sup>152</sup> There is nothing to suggest that a further body of work survives, given that Hickey himself wrote: 'The rapid movements of our progress through the country and the transitory glimpses thus alone we attained almost of everything gave me no opportunity in the

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<sup>148</sup> The suffix 'ta-gin' is an honorary title that means 'great man'. The transliteration is that used by Staunton and Barrow in their accounts of the Embassy. The mandarin's name is transliterated today as Wang Wenxiong. Hevia 1995: 90.

<sup>149</sup> Van-ta-gin was a mandarin of the second order, there being nine orders of both military and civil mandarins. Staunton reported that he wore a red globe of coral on his bonnet and that having distinguished himself in a war with Tibet was awarded a peacock's tail feather as a mark of favour by the Emperor with the order to wear it pendant from his bonnet. Staunton 1797 Vol II: 179

<sup>150</sup> A watercolour sketch by Alexander after Hickey's portrait of Van-ta-gin is in an album of drawings held by the British Museum. Five further versions of this watercolour are known, four of which are held by the British Library, the fifth by the Leger Gallery in London.

<sup>151</sup> These are currently held in the Kroch Library of Rare Manuscripts at Cornell University.

<sup>152</sup> Staunton 1797, Vol I: 94. Strickland mentions a volume of landscape sketches made on board the *Lion* and signed T.H., in the possession of a bookseller, Francis Edwards of High St. Marylebone, Strickland 1913: 483. The whereabouts of this volume is unknown.

way that I wished to bring into effect my intentions as a painter'.<sup>153</sup> Hickey suggests that being constantly on the move prevented him from producing a significant body of work. Painting in oils is certainly a slow process but Hickey was skilled in drawing with charcoal; it is therefore difficult to explain his small output. Staunton includes a detailed description of a Chinese temple written by Hickey in his published account of the embassy but perhaps on the long sea journeys Hickey was most valued for his entertaining conversation.<sup>154</sup> By contrast, Alexander is estimated to have produced fifty large colour wash drawings and a thousand sketches of the Embassy.<sup>155</sup> The actual figure may have been much higher, however, given that the British Library alone has eight hundred and seventy of his colour wash drawings in its collections today. Alexander also published two illustrated books based on his travels, *The Costumes of China* 1805 and *Picturesque Representation of the Dress and Manners of the Chinese* 1814.

Although as is well known, the embassy was a diplomatic and commercial failure, its members accumulated knowledge of China during their time there through observation, measuring, writing and sketching. The charting of the east coast allowed navigational maps to be drawn up; moreover, some of the party returned overland to Canton mapping the interior as they went. Macartney was presented with tea plants which he sent to Calcutta.<sup>156</sup> After their return to England several members of the Embassy published accounts of the journey, all of which became best sellers. Macartney kept two journals, the first for his own amusement which charted the journey as far as CochinChina (Vietnam) and the second as an official account of the passage across China and the imperial audience, but published neither.<sup>157</sup> The closest to an official account is that written by Staunton, who had access to Macartney's journals and quotes from them extensively.<sup>158</sup> Staunton's *Authentic*

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<sup>153</sup> Hickey 1797: not paginated.

<sup>154</sup> Staunton 1797, Vol II: 84-5.

<sup>155</sup> Cranmer-Byng 1962: 314.

<sup>156</sup> Hevia 1995: 204.

<sup>157</sup> A fine copy, dated c.1805 of Macartney's Journal documenting the trip from London to CochinChina is held by the Wellcome Institute in London. Note on verso leaf 2 initialled JB (John Barrow) states 'This journal was written by Lord Macartney on board the *Lion* merely for his own amusement': MS 3352. The manuscript of the second journal is in Tokyo, Cranmer-Byng 1962: 233.

<sup>158</sup> Sub-title of the account states that it was taken 'chiefly from the papers of His Excellency the Earl of Macartney' and those of Sir Erasmus Gower – the Captain of the *Lion*.

*Account of the Embassy* (1797) consists of two volumes corresponding to those of Macartney and is illustrated by black and white engravings after watercolours by Alexander. The books were accompanied by a folio of plates selected by Sir Joseph Banks, president of the Royal Society, underlining the level of interest in intellectual circles. Barrow also produced accounts of the Embassy, *Voyage to Cochinchina* (1806) and *Travels in China* (1804).<sup>159</sup> Descriptions of the Imperial court but also of the daily life of the ordinary Chinese, contained in both Staunton's and Barrow's publications, fascinated the reading public and were hugely successful, so much so that when further accounts were published by Aeneas Anderson and Samuel Holmes, valet to the Ambassador and a Private in the Light Dragoons respectively, Barrow described their books as 'vamped up by a London bookseller, second hand narratives written by others as a speculation that could not fail'.<sup>160</sup>

Hickey hoped to profit from the public interest generated by the publication of Staunton's *Account*. On his return from China in 1794, he spent time in London and Dublin but failed to re-establish himself as a painter. As previously noted, a lack of patronage in Dublin was compounded not only by the political instability of the time but also by the recent return of Hugh Douglas Hamilton to the city in 1792. Hickey applied to the East India Company for permission to return to India. On 2 August 1797 he obtained permission to travel. Hickey then wrote to Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, President of the Board of Control for Indian Affairs on the 12 August 1797 in the hope that Dundas might recommend him for a permanent position within the East India Company.<sup>161</sup> Dundas, as Home Secretary in the Pitt administration, had promoted the Macartney Embassy. As a means of introduction, Hickey cited the success of Staunton's recent publication while underlining his own involvement in the Embassy. He began his letter by lauding the achievements of the Embassy; he suggested that it may have failed in its prime objectives, but did hold promise of 'future intercourse' with the Chinese.<sup>162</sup> As outlined above, Hickey explained why he failed to produce much art whilst on the Embassy but he also

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<sup>159</sup> Barrow published two further books related to the Embassy, see Barrow 1807 and Barrow 1847.

<sup>160</sup> Barrow 1806a: 579-80.

<sup>161</sup> Hickey 1797: not paginated.

<sup>162</sup> Hickey 1797. Hickey echoes Macartney who believed that he had paved the way for future dialogue with the Qing court. Hevia 1995: 220.

commended Alexander's work, stating how it afforded him 'room to regret the deficiencies on my part and convey to me a particular satisfaction in having recommended him to his appointment'.<sup>163</sup> He then outlined his professional biography whilst underlining his intellectual credentials; he had learnt French as a child; whilst in Italy for six years he had learnt the Italian language and read their literature; as a prisoner of the Spanish he had become proficient in Spanish and in Portuguese after his time spent in Lisbon. Hickey had also taken the opportunity to send Dundas a copy of his own book, *The History of Painting and Sculpture from the Earliest Accounts* (Calcutta 1788, vol 1 only) which he had published during his first period in India: 'requesting that you will allow it the honour of some obscure corner in your library which a leisure moment may allow you to peruse it'<sup>164</sup>

Having promoted himself as both erudite and gifted in languages, Hickey added that his character in India was beyond reproach. Furthermore, he explained that despite the best wishes of his friends and patrons in Dublin, the unstable political situation in Ireland had precluded his employment as a portraitist. At fifty six he felt his position returning to India was a precarious one and he wished for some security. In asking for an appointment he declared himself 'happy to devote his application and render myself not unworthy of such patronage'.<sup>165</sup> Dundas refused his request; he was known for his 'Scottisation' of the East India Company so may have been biased against Hickey as an Irishman.<sup>166</sup> While there is no doubt that Dundas promoted Scottish interests in India, the East India Company had no history of direct patronage of artists working in India. The case of Hodges was an exception; he was paid a salary by the East India Company, though a part of his remuneration was paid by Warren Hastings himself.<sup>167</sup> Hickey subsequently sailed for India, arriving in

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<sup>163</sup> Hickey 1797: not paginated. It was Julius Caesar Ibbetson, who had accompanied the abortive Cathcart Embassy to China as far as Java, that recommended his former pupil, William Alexander, to the Macartney Embassy: Cranmer-Byng: 1962: 314.

<sup>164</sup> Hickey 1797: not paginated.

<sup>165</sup> Hickey 1797: not paginated.

<sup>166</sup> Nechtman 2013: 120-122, Bayly (ed) 1990: 125. Dundas took a seat on the newly formed Board of Control, established following the passage of Pitt's India Bill in 1784 to oversee the East India Company and henceforth appoint the Governor-General of Bengal. His influence on the Board of Control increased when he became the Board's President in 1793. A position he held until 1801.

<sup>167</sup> Stuebe 1973: 660 Hastings, acting in a personal capacity wrote letters of recommendation for Zoffany and Arthur William Devis whose father, the portraitist Arthur Devis, he knew.



Madras in late 1798, where, apart from a short sojourn in Calcutta, he was to remain until his death in May 1824.

Although Hickey's acceptance of Macartney's invitation to join the embassy may have been due in part to a wish to experience new places, his response to the publication of Staunton's book underlined his continual need of patrons and his willingness to exploit any situation that would offer new patronage and financial security. Hickey's agency and self-promotion in his search for work was relentless; throughout this thesis the importance of his ties to the flexible, interconnecting Irish transnational network of patronage will also be highlighted.

### Conclusion

In the preface to the second edition of his book *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1960), which was one of the earliest studies to consider European perception and representation of distant lands and people, Bernard Smith underlines his belief in a 'cognitive theory of perception'.<sup>168</sup> That is to say, seeing is conditioned by knowing. Before considering the portraits that Hickey painted while living and working in India it is important, therefore, to highlight both the type of art education he received in Dublin and the conventions of Western art practice that he brought to his work. It is by not only understanding the personal and professional contexts that determined the form Hickey's practice took in Ireland, but also how he responded to the demands made by patrons and the expectations of the viewing public, that it is then possible to analyse his images, made at specific historical moments in Ireland and subsequently in India, in a meaningful way.

Consideration of Hickey's early practice in Ireland demonstrates a key point; Irish art made in the period under discussion, should be analysed in the context of Ireland's relationship with both England and the wider British Empire. Analysis of his portrait of Viscount Townshend and its display in Dublin's Mansion House, for example, drew attention to the formative role of portraits in reinforcing hierarchies

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<sup>168</sup> Smith 1985: vii.

of power and colonial domination in Ireland. This function of grand manner portraits will be further discussed when considering Hickey's later career in Madras, allowing intra-imperial comparisons to be made between Ireland and India, as both were colonised lands.<sup>169</sup> However, Ireland's complicated colonial relationship with England during this period meant that for many Irish people Britain's nascent empire represented a chance for personal advancement. Hickey, for example, left the relatively small Irish art world in search of patronage. Travelling to England, his social mobility and ultimately the possibility of travelling to India, depended on the links he made with other Irishmen in London who, in their turn, had prospered through their ties to an Irish transnational network of patronage. With access to China and India through British commercial and diplomatic routes, this network offered Hickey opportunities that would not otherwise have been available to him.

It is significant that Hickey was an *Irish* travelling artist. The question of his Irishness not only concerns the particularities of his art training in Dublin but also the importance of ethnicity in understanding how the networks of patronage that underpinned Georgian society worked. Moreover, given the both/and nature of Ireland's ties to the nascent British Empire, as a colonised country increasingly implicated in the imperial project, illuminating comparisons and contrasts may be made that would not otherwise be possible. Close study of Hickey's portraits, analysed within an overarching theme of empire, therefore, enriches both Irish art history and more general histories of art and the British Empire

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<sup>169</sup> See pp.53-4 above, introduction, p.29 and chapter three pp.135-6.

## Chapter Two

### Commerce, Conquest and Change: Calcutta 1784-91

Thomas Hickey left England for India at a time of great change, as Britain's commercial interests in the subcontinent increasingly intersected with colonial ambitions through conquest and territorial expansion. Furthermore, the East India Company, which held a monopoly over British trade with the subcontinent, no longer functioned simply as a trading company, but now played an active role in governance of British interests in India. This chapter will focus on the specific contexts of time and place within which Hickey painted his Indian portraits. It will also consider the ways in which his work may have been shaped by his background as an Irish artist. The aim is not only to use 'context' to elucidate Hickey's art but also to use his art to illuminate Anglo-Indian power relations at a specific historic conjuncture.

Hickey had lived and worked in England for nine years, five of which were spent in London, the centre of British trade with the subcontinent, before removing to India. This chapter will begin by examining the various ways in which India was imagined in Britain during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, underlining Hickey's specific expectations as an artist travelling to the subcontinent. The second section will consider Hickey's agency in his constant search for patrons in Calcutta, with reference both to how he benefitted from his connections to the Irish transnational network of patronage discussed in chapter one and to how he promoted himself as a fashionable yet erudite and cultured artist. Hickey left little in the way of textual archive apart from his correspondence with the East India Company and, as previously noted, a letter to Dundas and descriptive passages included by George Staunton in his account of the Macartney Embassy. No sitters' book, for example, is known to exist. However, the portraits Hickey painted whilst resident in Calcutta evoke the world in which he found himself. The third and final section offers therefore, an analysis of the function of portraiture in Calcutta,

highlighting the sort of commissions that Hickey may have anticipated and received. Furthermore, while the verisimilitude and aesthetic appeal of Hickey's work are noteworthy, it will be shown that of at least equal significance is how the images may be analysed in terms of differential relationships of power: not only between coloniser and colonised but also within the British and indigenous communities.

### Section One: Imagining India

In his daily life, before he left England for India in 1780, Hickey would have been aware of Indian products, of pepper, cotton and fine muslins. He may have visited the royal menagerie at the Tower of London, where he could have seen exotic animals brought from India and their Indian handlers. Above all, he would have been aware of the importance of trade with India to British commerce. This section will begin by considering the changing role of the trading company, the East India Company, in Indian affairs. Linked to this will be a discussion of how Britons returning from India were perceived in the metropole. In order to understand how Hickey may have imagined India, visual representations of Indian subjects, including prints, portraits and maps will then be analysed. A final discussion will highlight the way that eighteenth-century scholars, including Edmund Burke, conceptualised the subcontinent.

During the 1770s, when Hickey arrived in London, the East India Company enjoyed a monopoly over British trade to the East, dispatching large fleets annually with goods for export, and in turn sold vast quantities of imports, including tea from China, declaring annual dividends for its stockholders.<sup>1</sup> However, throughout the 1770s, the changing role of the Company on the Indian subcontinent aroused growing unease. Although at its core still a maritime trading company, the Company had, in addition, since 1765 when the Mughal Emperor had granted it the *diwani*, that is to say the right to collect land revenue, of a vast tract of north-eastern India

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<sup>1</sup> Bowen 2002: 25, Marshall 1987: 102-15, Osborn 2002: 205-6, Washbrook 2012: 52.

comprising Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, assumed other roles, all with the aim of securing efficient revenue collection (fig. 2.1). It took responsibility for the administration of justice, a system of military fiscalism developed, fortifications were built and the Company's army was greatly enlarged, creating in effect a garrison state.<sup>2</sup> Distance from London (the round trip to India at this time took at least twelve months) meant that Company servants enjoyed a degree of autonomy and, in consequence, opportunities for personal enrichment. Nevertheless, the Company was dependent on the British crown and parliament for the renewal of its trading charter. In the words of the historian, H. V. Bowen, as the 'trader became sovereign' over millions of Indians a feeling of anxiety grew in the metropole concerning its conduct in India along with a widespread belief that the Company in London was an inflexible institution incapable of internal reform.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, a series of acts in the 1770s and 1780s brought the Company under tighter parliamentary control, thereby transforming it, in Bowen's words, into an 'imperial agency'.<sup>4</sup>

Metropolitan anxiety in Britain concerning India and the role of the Company often focused on the figure of the returning 'nabob'.<sup>5</sup> Flaunting their new found wealth at a time when not only was the East India Company struggling to pay its stockholders' dividends but also news of a devastating famine in Bengal from 1769-70 was reaching England, the nabobs were considered a social, political and moral threat to society at large, the living embodiment of the excesses and corrupting influence of Empire.<sup>6</sup> At the very least they were distrusted for bringing the 'foreign' home; at the worst they were accused of despotism and misgovernment; thus, giving the lie to notions of English liberty. The opprobrium heaped on their heads included accusations of *arrivisme*, being Scottish and having links to the Jewish community.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bowen 2002: 20-4, Marshall 1987: 93-137, Peers 2012: 22.

<sup>3</sup> Bowen 2002: 23-4.

<sup>4</sup> Bowen 2002: 28.

<sup>5</sup> Nabob was a corruption of the word Nawab, the title of Mughal rulers of various Successor States. Used pejoratively it referred to Britons returning home after making their fortune in India.

<sup>6</sup> For discussions of the nabob controversy see Lawson and Philips 1984: 225-241, Smylitopoulos 2008: 39-59, Nechtman 2013: 92-238.

<sup>7</sup> Anti-Scottish feeling persisted after the Jacobite wars. Lawson and Philips 1984: 230. See chapter one, pp.75-6, for reference to Dundas and the 'Scottisation' of the East India Company. To avoid East India Company controls of the remitting of money, returning servants often bought diamonds which they then sold on their return. The diamond market in London was controlled by the Jewish population. Nechtman 2013: 159-160.

Robert Clive, erstwhile hero of the Battle of Plassey in 1757, exemplified 'nabobery': reaping the benefits of a valuable grant of land revenue known as a *jaghir*, he bought country estates as well as a London townhouse and an art collection, controlled seven seats in parliament and narrowly escaped impeachment on charges of corruption in 1773.<sup>8</sup> Warren Hastings, the first governor-general of British India and 'King of the Nabobs' was not so lucky.<sup>9</sup> He was impeached and tried for corruption from 1788-1795.

Hastings' trial is noteworthy not only on account of the theatrical rhetoric of his accusers, Edmund Burke and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, both of whom were Irish, but also for the range of prints it prompted, made by the greatest graphic satirists of the day. James Gillray (1756-1815), for example, produced complex images that required a literate and visually aware spectator to appreciate the multi-layered meanings embedded within them. In 1786, as the case for the impeachment of Hastings was gathering momentum, Gillray published *The Political-Banditti Assailing the Saviour of India* (fig. 2.2). A rapacious and splendidly attired Hastings, complete with turban, is mounted on a camel. Burke, instantly recognisable to his contemporaries by virtue of his overlarge spectacles, clumsily leads the attack on Hastings' honour; a dishevelled Charles James Fox prepares to stab Hastings in the back whilst Lord North, his sword blunted by the loss of the American colonies, greedily gathers up Indian revenue. Hastings, seated on high, is shielded from assault by the Crown.<sup>10</sup> The title of the print is significant in that it refers to Burke and his associates as 'political banditti'. In a general sense, 'banditti' suggested wandering bands of criminals, but more specifically, in this period, it referred to Englishmen who had taken on the allegedly immoral attitudes of the oriental.<sup>11</sup> The *Public Advertiser* had gone so far as to refer to returning Nabobs as 'execrable banditti'.<sup>12</sup> Usually

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<sup>8</sup> Jasanoff 2006: 32-9. A *jaghir* was traditionally given to Mughal officers in lieu of a salary. Clive received his *jaghir* from the newly incumbent Nawab of Bengal, Mir Jafar following the Battle of Plassey (1757).

<sup>9</sup> Flood 2006: 55.

<sup>10</sup> This is a reference to the intervention of King George III in the matter of Fox's India Bill of 1783. The Bill subsequently failed resulting in the collapse of the Fox-North Coalition.

<sup>11</sup> Lawson and Philips 1984: 225-41.

<sup>12</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 20 December 1776 as cited in footnote 8, Barringer, Quilley and Fordham 2007: 378. Solkin 2007: 120-39.

portrayed as violent, immoral and vicious, banditti were also grudgingly admired for their vigorous masculinity. Therein lies Gillray's satire: he has depicted the 'political banditti' as excitable and ineffective in their attack on Hastings. However, Hastings, the 'King of the Nabobs', is not orientalist as a masculine figure as might be expected from the 'Saviour' label. Instead, with his be-jewelled turban and lady's shoes, he appears to have been feminised by his contact with India and its corrupting riches.

Gillray's complex image highlights contemporary attitudes towards the activities of the East India Company and its servants in India. It is of particular interest to the present thesis because through the figure of Burke, it links the Orient and Ireland. Scholars, notably David Solkin, have argued that the visual representation of orientalist banditti in the 1770s was synonymous with the work of John Hamilton Mortimer (1740-1779) who, in turn, drew on the banditti iconography of Salvator Rosa (1615-1673).<sup>13</sup> However, unlike Rosa's banditti who appear in a mixture of classical and renaissance clothes, Mortimer's often wore turbans. In addition, their costume included armour similar to that worn by Burke and Fox in Gillray's cartoon. However, Burke's banditti is 'othered' as putatively Catholic, by virtue of his biretta.<sup>14</sup> As Nicholas Robinson has shown, Burke was often caricatured as Catholic in images that sometimes featured potatoes as well as a biretta, both stereotypical indicators of the Irish.<sup>15</sup> In addition, by contrast to Fox and North, Burke is shown barefoot. Robinson argues that Burke's lack of shoes suggests his impracticality.<sup>16</sup> An alternative interpretation is that Gillray is introducing a further stereotype of the Irish as barefoot peasants, thus demeaning the sophisticated politician. As previously noted in relation to Maria Edgeworth's fictional Lady Clonbrony, in Gillray's portrayal of Burke there is an implied connection between Ireland and the Orient as regards 'otherness'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Solkin 2007: 120-39, Robinson 1996: 91.

<sup>14</sup> Burke was Protestant, though of Catholic descent. His father had taken the public, humiliating Oath of Conformity. O'Brien 1992: 85.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson 1996: 40-1.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson 1996: 40.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter one pp. 57-8.

Satirical prints were significant in that they were widely circulated, copied and pirated; thereby reinforcing stereotypes by the repetition of caricatures. In addition to prints, the visual representations of India that Hickey encountered in London during the 1770s would also have included portraits by artists active in the subcontinent. It is probable that Hickey saw portraits of Muhammed Ali Khan, Nawab of Arcot, exhibited by Tilly Kettle (1735-1786), the first professional portraitist to work in India, at the Society of Artists in 1771 and 1775 (fig. 2.3).<sup>18</sup> Not only were these images of a new exotic subject, but they also had the novelty of having been painted wholly in India, since Kettle had shipped them to England as finished portraits, rather than as unfinished works so as to avoid having to pay import duty and warehouse charges, as British artists in India usually did.<sup>19</sup> Kettle's apparent success may have suggested to Hickey that there was money to be made in India as an artist. It is also highly likely that he visited Vauxhall Gardens where he would have seen Francis Hayman's (1708-1776) *Robert Clive and Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey 1757* which was displayed in the annexe to the Rotunda from 1762 (fig. 2.4).<sup>20</sup> Hayman, who had never been to India, depicted the meeting of Clive and Mir Jafar, the commander of the Nawab of Bengal's army whom Clive had encouraged to defect to the British side, thus ensuring victory at Plassey. Arms outstretched, in the guise of benevolent victor, Clive receives Jafar under the protection of the flag of the Union of England, Scotland and Wales. Hayman's picture, one of the first to use Indian subject matter in a patriotic modern history painting, was intended to raise public sentiment in a time of war. During the Seven Years War, from 1756 to 1763, Britain defended its interests in the subcontinent against France.

Beyond his access to such pictures it is impossible to know how Hickey imagined India. For gentlemen with the benefit of a classical education who had read Arrian's *Campaigns of Alexander*, it was considered an extension of the ancient world; for others, given the East India Company's trading alliances with Mughal

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<sup>18</sup> In 1803 Hickey painted the portrait of Prince Azim-ud-Duala nephew of Muhammed Ali Khan. Its similarity to Kettle's painting and one by George Willison exhibited in the Society of Artists 1775 strongly suggests he was aware of the earlier images. See chapter three pp. 139-41.

<sup>19</sup> The levy on 'foreign' pictures which included those made by British artists living abroad was altered in 1793 to allow artists to import their own pictures. Archer 1979: 440.

<sup>20</sup> Only the modello for this painting survives today.



rulers, it was congruous with Hindustan and the Mughal Empire. Thus, on the one hand the subcontinent was thought of in terms of ancient heroism while on the other hand in terms of exotic power as exemplified by that of the Mughal Empire. One of the first texts to describe India as a meaningful geographical entity was James Rennell's 1782 'Map of Hindoostan' with its accompanying written account of the land, *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan; or the Mogul[s] Empire*, published in 1783 (fig. 2.5).<sup>21</sup> 'Hindustan', the land of the Hindus, was a term initially used by the Mughals to describe the northern plains of the subcontinent. As Mughal territory expanded southwards to Cape Comorin, Hindustan came to be variously understood in Europe as the land of the Hindus, as synonymous with the Mughal Empire or as comprising the entire subcontinent. Matthew Edney argues that Rennell conflated the three, thereby establishing a conceptual equivalent in Europe between the land of the Hindus and the Mughal Empire whilst referring in the *Memoir* to the whole subcontinent as 'India', in effect unifying an enormous area made up of disparate regions and polities.<sup>22</sup>

The publication of Rennell's map occurred at a time when British interests in India, although increasingly territorial, were still primarily commercial. Edney draws attention to the map's title cartouche which foregrounds Britain's trading interests: Britannia's spear for example rests possessively on a bolt of cotton while an East Indiaman (ship) is visible in the distance (fig. 2.6). He argues that both the wreath encircling the cartouche, and the mercenary soldiers (the sepoys) pointing out the British victories on the monument, suggest parallels between the British and Roman Empires. Edney also notes that the laurel leaves suggestive of Roman imperial victory are replaced in the wreath by the opium poppy, the cash crop of Britain's trade with China.<sup>23</sup> Thus, commerce, conquest and empire all intersect in the cartouche. Of further significance to this thesis is the inclusion of an artist's palette alongside cartographic instruments, a detail that highlights the formative role of artists in

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<sup>21</sup> Edney 1997: 9-17, 135-6. Rennell was the surveyor general of Bengal from 1767-7 and made the first, European regional survey of Bengal from 1765-71.

<sup>22</sup> Edney 1997: 11.

<sup>23</sup> Edney 1997: 15.

documenting Indian land and its people.<sup>24</sup> Edney also quotes an explanation given by Rennell in the *Memoir* concerning the Brahmins who are depicted in the cartouche presenting a *sastra*, a Hindu religious code, to Britannia: 'Brittannia [*sic*] receiving into her protection, the sacred Books of the Hindoos, presented by the Pundits, or learned Bramins [*sic*]: in Allusion to the humane Interposition of the British Legislature in Favor of the Natives of Bengal, in the Year 1781.'<sup>25</sup> Thus the cartouche not only highlights British commercial and imperial interest in India, but also the interest, and the role of the artist, in acquiring knowledge both of the land and its people. Furthermore, both in the written text and visually, Britannia is presented as a benevolent ruler. She receives the Brahmins with an open-handed, welcoming gesture reminiscent of that of Clive in Hayman's image. In both images the Indians are depicted as willingly accepting British rule.

Benevolence takes on an extra significance when art produced in an imperial context is considered. The implication is that, in a similar manner to the so-called 'deserving poor', who through no fault of their own cannot survive without the intervention of a benefactor, the Indians cannot prosper without the protection of the benevolent British.<sup>26</sup> Thus supposed acts of benevolence went some way to assuaging any doubts the metropolitan public may have had about an increasing policy of conquest and expansion on the subcontinent.<sup>27</sup> The interlinked concepts of benevolence and sympathy allowed the public to experience an affective association with the indigenous population but at a safe distance. By considering the concepts of benevolence and sympathy, ideas of sensibility so important in promoting Britain's commercial society as a moral one, may also be seen to intersect with eighteenth-century discourses of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Edney suggests that the inclusion of a mallet and chisel may indicate the importance of freemasonry in Europe at that time. Edney 1997: 13. As will be discussed, the importance of freemasonry extended to British India, offering artists a means of gaining patronage. The mallet and chisel may simply suggest building projects.

<sup>25</sup> Rennell quoted in Edney 1997: 13.

<sup>26</sup> See Barrell 1980: 67 for discussion of the 'good poor'.

<sup>27</sup> For an analysis of metropolitan fears concerning an Indian empire of conquest see Osborn 2002: 213-21.

<sup>28</sup> See chapter one, pp.50-51 and Festa 2006: 235-7,

Nevertheless, despite such visual constructions of ‘benevolence’, criticism was mounting of the East India Company and its actions in India. One of its most vocal critics was Burke, and never more so than in his speech in support of Charles James Fox’s India Bill of 1783; a bill which he had himself drafted.<sup>29</sup> Hickey must have been aware of Burke’s speech, since when in Portugal whilst en route to India he painted a double portrait, in and around 1783, known today as *Edmund Burke in Conversation with Charles James Fox* in which Burke holds a copy of the speech (fig. 2.7). Hickey may have based the portraits on prints of Burke and Fox. He subsequently took the picture to India where he sold it to William Burke (friend of Edmund Burke and deputy-paymaster general to the King’s troops in India)) who in turn gave the painting to the diarist and lawyer, William Hickey.<sup>30</sup> In his speech Burke underlined the difficulty for Europeans in representing India. He struggled to describe the magnitude of the subcontinent not only conceptually but also literally as he listed its dimensions and made comparisons in scale to European territories. Burke, who had not been to India, most probably culled his geographical information from Rennell’s recently published map and accompanying *Memoir*. In his evocation of India, its obscurity and its vastness, Burke had recourse to the language of the sublime, an aesthetic that he had theorised in 1757 in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. With a rhetorical flourish he attacked the East India Company and its servants, declaring: ‘Through all that vast extent of country there is not a man who eats a mouthful of rice but by the permission of the East India Company.’<sup>31</sup>

Burke’s interventions in Indian affairs, in Fox’s India Bill and, latterly, the trial of Hastings, are significant in that they highlight the interest of late-eighteenth-century public figures in the activities of the East India Company. Sara Suleri has analysed Burke’s use of the language of the sublime in his speech in favour of Fox’s India Bill, making the thought-provoking suggestion that parallels could be drawn

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<sup>29</sup> The Bill aimed to punish abuses in India, to further observance of Indian rights and customs and increase control from London. O’Brien 1992: 314, Bourke 2015: 517-575.

<sup>30</sup> Hickey Vol III, 1948: 349.

<sup>31</sup> Burke quoted in Bourke 2015: 564.

between the functioning of the aesthetic of the sublime and colonisation.<sup>32</sup> She furthers her argument by drawing attention to Burke's use of the term 'sympathy' in the *Enquiry*<sup>33</sup>. In his consideration of the 'effects of SYMPATHY in the distresses of others', Burke wrote:

I am convinced we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others; for let the affection be what it will in appearance, if it does not make us shun such objects, if on the contrary it induces us to approach them, if it makes us dwell on them, in this case I conceive we must have a delight or pleasure of some species or other in contemplating objects of this kind..... This is not an unmixed delight but blended with no small uneasiness...the pain we feel, prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer.<sup>34</sup>

For Suleri, Burke's analysis of the effects of 'sympathy' indicates a sense of alienation rather than one of association.<sup>35</sup> Given the last line of the extract, it could also be noted, that such supposed alienation was made more palatable by acts of benevolence. However, in a previous section on 'Sympathy' in the *Enquiry*, he stressed that man is never an indifferent spectator to what other men do or suffer.<sup>36</sup> Burkean notions of 'sympathy' would, thus, appear to oscillate between alienation and association. Anxiety due to the loss of the American Colonies as finalised by the Treaty of Paris 1783, the emergence of an empire of conquest, and concern over corruption in India may be linked to dynamics of both loss and gain. Furthermore, such anxiety may be explained in terms of Burkean 'sympathy', which can be understood to entail not only a sense of complicity and culpability but also frissons of a delightful horror at the exercise of power, that is to say, power exercised at a distance.

Consideration of Rennell's cartouche, his map and memoirs and by extension their possible use by Burke in researching his speech, serves to highlight links

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<sup>32</sup> Suleri 1992: 24-48.

<sup>33</sup> Suleri 1992: 36-40.

<sup>34</sup> Burke, Section XIV, 1990: 42-3.

<sup>35</sup> Suleri 1992:38.

<sup>36</sup> Burke, Section XIII, 1990: 41.

between India, England and Ireland at a time of territorial expansion, exploration and change. Although he spent most of his working life in England, until his death in 1797, Burke believed that the three great evils of his time were the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland, 'Indianism' in Asia and Jacobinism in Europe, all of which he associated with the abuse of power.<sup>37</sup> Forced to give up his Bristol seat over his support for the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 and having been threatened verbally and physically at the time of the Gordon Riots, Burke became less vocal concerning Irish affairs. Conor Cruise O'Brien has argued that Burke's speeches concerning India demonstrate a form of 'rhetorical doubleness', allowing him to say what he couldn't safely say about colonial intervention and abuses of power in Ireland.<sup>38</sup>

Burke was not alone in having difficulty in conceptualising India. As Europeans increasingly engaged with the wider world throughout the eighteenth century, the question of how societies developed aroused intellectual debate. Two theoretical explanations are relevant when considering contemporary understanding of the historical development of Indian society, namely climatic determinism and what is known today as stadial theory. The belief that climate determined cultural difference had a long history, but it was Montesquieu in *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) who explicitly linked climate to different political systems.<sup>39</sup> To an extent, climatic determinism was compatible with earlier monogenetic or biblical theories of human cultural difference since both assumed the existence of an original unitary people that experienced a 'Fall'. The subsequent dispersal of peoples resulted in the diversity of humankind. An alternative theory, linked to a secular concept of history as progressive and unfolding over time, suggested that human societies universally developed according to a series of four stages. Initially proposed by John Locke and developed by theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment, including Adam Smith and John Millar, stadial theory suggested that peoples progressed through stages as hunter gatherers, pastoralism

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<sup>37</sup> Bartlett 2004: 82.

<sup>38</sup> O'Brien 1992: xxvi, 'rhetorical doubleness' is a term borrowed from Joseph Lennon who uses it to describe the means by which certain Irish authors in the first decades of the nineteenth century used and parodied the clichés and rhetoric of the Persian letters genre to criticise English intervention in India. They were subversive in that they were simultaneously criticising English involvement in Ireland. Lennon 2008: 117

<sup>39</sup> Bindman 2002: 58-61.

and agriculture to commerce, the latter considered to be indicative of civilised existence. For Smith, it was changes in the way of gaining sustenance that differentiated the four stages, while, for Millar, the four stages were linked to the acquisition of property, which in turn determined the system of government.<sup>40</sup> A further variation of the model was proposed by the historian Edward Gibbon, who reduced the stages to two, contrasting vagrant and settled societies.<sup>41</sup> All variations presented commercial societies as the most civilised model, offering the leisure to develop refinement and taste; those that were not could thus be unfavourably contrasted as uncivilised or primitive.

Given Hickey's own situation, this association of art and commerce is significant. Not only had he trained in Dublin where commerce and art were tightly linked but, in addition, he had worked in London, the commercial centre of the British maritime trading empire. Furthermore, he enjoyed considerable success amongst the merchants of the British factory in Lisbon before arriving in India, itself a centre of international trade. In 1788, and by then in Calcutta, Hickey wrote:

By the antiquity of a nation, as it concerns the history of the arts, can only be understood that period from whence its date begins in the proceeding of social cultivation; for the arts begin in social cultivation and never unfold their virtues in uncivilised communities and take flight from barbarous incursions.<sup>42</sup>

Hickey was here writing about the development of painting and sculpture in the antique world, using classical histories as a source but, as in Enlightenment models of history, these texts linked the development of art to the emergence of settled societies.<sup>43</sup> This belief in the intersection of art, commerce and civilised society may have contributed to Hickey's decision to travel to Calcutta, the commercial centre of British India, in search of patrons rather than trying his luck in Madras or the courts of the nawabs.

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<sup>40</sup> Wolloch 2011: 246,253. Meek 1976: 165-6.

<sup>41</sup> Wolloch 2011: 254.

<sup>42</sup> Hickey 1788: v.

<sup>43</sup> Hickey's text will be discussed in detail in section two of this chapter, pp. 98-103.

With its emphasis on commercial society as the most civilised social grouping, stadial theory may have helped to explain the development of Western art, but it fell short when attempts were made to differentiate Indian society from that of Britain. Not even cyclical theories concerning the rise and inevitable fall of empire, which so exercised the contemporary British public, could explain the contradictions of Indian society. As the historian Tillman Nechtman has suggested, India represented a 'problematic colonial geography'.<sup>44</sup> Its people were evidently not at an early 'stage' in development: material evidence of both Hindu and Mughal civilisation could be seen in the built environment, in their cities and temples. Orientalist scholarship also underlined the richness of older Sanskrit and Persian texts. Moreover, Indians had been engaging in internal and international trade for centuries. Indeed, Adam Smith considered Indian society to be a commercial one and placed it alongside Britain at the highest stage of civilisation.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, a perception of Hindu culture as stagnant and the declining Mughal Empire as despotic was widespread.<sup>46</sup> European travellers repeatedly commented on India's desolate landscapes of ruins, including abandoned forts, palaces and tombs.<sup>47</sup> On the one hand, extensive ruins were evidence of previous civilisations, thereby distinguishing the subcontinent from domains of 'pure nature'. On the other hand, India's ruins, often encroached by jungle, not only suggested decay but also the failure of indigenous society to build on previous achievements.<sup>48</sup> Linked as it was to notions of progress, stadial theory could not explain this apparent hiatus or reversal in fortunes. However, consideration of stadial theory in conjunction with the concept of climatic determinism allowed Europeans to conclude that the effects of the Indian climate had resulted not only in the supposed timidity, indolence, and childishness of the Hindu, but also the degeneration of the previously warlike, conquering Mughals into despotic, effeminate, lovers of luxury and, furthermore, that these characteristics rendered the indigenous population susceptible to, even welcoming of, conquest.<sup>49</sup> The

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<sup>44</sup> Nechtman 2013: 33, 22-59.

<sup>45</sup> As discussed in Washbrook 2004: 483.

<sup>46</sup> Nechtman 2013: 51-9, Cohn 1996: 78-88.

<sup>47</sup> Arnold 2005: 76-80.

<sup>48</sup> Arnold 2005: 76.

<sup>49</sup> Arnold 2005: 35-7, 74-109, Nechtman 2013: 51, Cohn 1996: 95.

persistence of such stereotypes is underlined by the fact that, twenty years after his first stay in Calcutta and by then resident in Madras, Hickey reiterated the European concept of the 'timid' Indoos [*sic*] whilst accusing the 'Moor-men' of unrestrained 'conquest and usurpations'.<sup>50</sup> As noted, a repeated theme in both classical and Enlightenment histories was the drawing of unfavourable contrasts between nomadic and settled societies, the barbaric and the civilised. Such oppositions have political implications in that they were not only used to explain the rise of ancient empires but also to justify burgeoning British imperial expansion as 'civilising'.<sup>51</sup>

As has been shown, competing ideas about India circulated in Europe in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Jeremy Osborn has noted that, from 1782, news of India no longer competed with reports from America; consequently, Indian affairs were widely reported in the British newspapers and monthly periodicals.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Hickey moved to India at a time of great interest in the subcontinent. He would there find himself part of a society that was not only changing but was itself transitory; the Irish and British were then actively discouraged from settling in India by the East India Company. Burke likened their flight through the subcontinent to that of birds of prey: swooping in, plundering, leaving with their spoils and making no attempt to invest in the subcontinent.<sup>53</sup> The nature of colonial society in Calcutta would have consequences for the type of patronage Hickey could expect.

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<sup>50</sup> Hickey 1804: 9-10.

<sup>51</sup> Bourke 2015: 180-1.

<sup>52</sup> Osborn 2002: 203.

<sup>53</sup> Edmund Burke's speech in favour of Fox's India Bill, 1783, discussed in Bourke 2015: 565, O'Brien 1992: 324.



## Section Two: The Artist as Commercial 'Actor'

In March 1784, after his eventful journey from England, Thomas Hickey finally arrived in Calcutta, a populous, cosmopolitan city inhabited by Indians (both Hindu and Muslim), Armenians, Chinese, Persians, Arabs and Europeans, along with people of mixed European and Indian descent.<sup>54</sup> As well as being an important centre of commerce, the city was the administrative capital of British India. Although still predominately a commercial city, Calcutta was changing; the administration run by servants of the East India Company now followed a more governmental model, while the activities of the Company itself were increasingly determined by the exigencies of revenue collection and a system of military fiscalism was in place. Under the provisions of Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773, the Governor of Bengal now served as governor-general of all British territories in the subcontinent. The Act not only provided for a Council whose powers circumscribed that of the governor-general, but also a Supreme Court. Consequently, judges, legal practitioners and administrative staff from both Ireland and Britain arrived in the city, thus expanding potential patronage for ambitious European artists such as Hickey.

Throughout his long, peripatetic career, Hickey actively sought patronage. Lacking any family connections in India, before leaving London, he used his connections with the Irish transnational network of patronage, previously discussed, to acquire both references for the East India Company and letters of introduction to Warren Hastings, then governor-general of British India.<sup>55</sup> Artists travelling to India hoped to do so with the permission of the East India Company as they could then apply for passage aboard an East Indiaman. A connection made with the Company

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<sup>54</sup> Estimates of Calcutta's population at this time vary widely from 300,000 augmented to 600,000 by the daily influx of workers from surrounding villages. Europeans numbered around 4,000. Hardgrave 2004: 132. This is a rise in population from 100,000 as estimated in the middle of the century, with Europeans numbering 1,000. Further confusion arises from the use of the term Portuguese at the time to describe any native convert to Catholicism. Losty 1990: 20,22.

<sup>55</sup> See chapter one, section three pp. 66-9.

and its servants would also, potentially, ease their assimilation into colonial society. Thus, in January 1779 Hickey wrote to the Court of Directors of the East India Company:

The humble petition of Thomas Hickey

Herewith

That your Petitioner has been bred a Portrait Painter as will appear by the annexed Certificate and is desirous of proceeding to the East Indies to provide for himself in the way of his Profession.

He therefore humbly prays your Honors[sic]Permission for that purpose, being ready to give such security as your Honors may require.<sup>56</sup>

The 'annexed Certificate', written and signed by Reynolds and co-signed by two other academicians, confirmed that Hickey 'from his youth has pursued the profession of a Portrait Painter, has been several years in Italy for his improvement therein, and has ever since followed that line of business and no other to our knowledge'.<sup>57</sup> Artists travelling with the permission of the East India Company needed to offer securities, which could be as much as £1000 and pay for their passage.<sup>58</sup> They also needed to equip themselves for a long journey and with artists' materials.<sup>59</sup> Securities of £500 apiece for Hickey were offered by Hugh Bell, a merchant of Old Bond Street and Stratford Canning, a merchant banker in Clements Lane.<sup>60</sup> Canning's support again shows the strength of the Irish network: his father was a barrister who had a practice in Dublin, his family was Irish and he had connections to the network through Trinity College Dublin and the Middle Temple.<sup>61</sup>

In the absence of any of Hickey's personal papers, much of what is known of the social milieu that subsequently surrounded him in Calcutta is gleaned from the

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<sup>56</sup> Hickey 1779.

<sup>57</sup> Reynolds 1779.

<sup>58</sup> Archer 1979: 47.

<sup>59</sup> Archer 1979: 58-60.

<sup>60</sup> Cotton 1924: not paginated.

<sup>61</sup> Bailey 2013: 175-7.

memoirs of William Hickey.<sup>62</sup> The memoirs also give an indication of how consistently the artist actively sought and re-made ties of patronage in his 'persevering attention to his own interests'.<sup>63</sup> For example, in 1782, while travelling to India for the third time via Portugal, William Hickey by chance lodged at the same address in Lisbon, Mrs William's Hotel, as Thomas, who, as already noted, spent three years in Lisbon as a consequence of the exigencies of Britain's war with France. William recorded that the artist 'had painted most of the English ladies and gentlemen and was then engaged upon the portraits of several Portuguese of rank'.<sup>64</sup> Portraits which have survived from the artist's time in Portugal include small oils of the extended Bedford family, John George Livius, a Bengal Court servant returning to England and a Goanese girl (fig. 2.8), together with larger oils of David de Pury, importer of Brazilian diamonds and rare woods, banker to the King of Portugal and slave trader (fig.2.9); Gerard de Visme (fig. 2.10), a member of the British factory and wealthy diamond trader; a girl with a piano, and Charlotte Dee (fig. 2.11), daughter of the British vice-consul in Lisbon; Burke and Fox, as described above; and an ambitious Reynoldsian allegory, *An Actor between the Muses of Tragedy and Comedy*. Of less secure attribution is a portrait of Maria, Queen of Portugal, painted in 1783.

Although Thomas had previously executed a portrait in chalk of William's brother Joseph, their encounter in Lisbon in 1782 appears to have been the first time that the two men had met. The artist was quick to re-establish the connection with the diarist's family and recounted the 'obligation he lay under to his [William Hickey's] father and brother'.<sup>65</sup> William also noted that, on Thomas' subsequent arrival in Calcutta he 'took a large handsome house in the most fashionable part' of the city.<sup>66</sup> This was a financial gamble on the artist's part, presumably with the strategic aim of presenting himself as both successful and in demand. Anything that set an artist apart in the highly competitive art market of Calcutta was to be exploited. For example, when the Irish miniaturist John Camillus Hone (1759-1836)

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<sup>62</sup> William Hickey retired to England where he subsequently wrote his memoirs in 1808. They were edited and published in four volumes by Alfred Spencer from 1913-1925.

<sup>63</sup> Hickey, Vol III 1948:210.

<sup>64</sup> Hickey, Vol II 1950: 386-7.

<sup>65</sup> Hickey, Vol II 1950: 386.

<sup>66</sup> Hickey Vol III 1948: 202.

stopped in Madras, en route for Calcutta in 1782, Lord Macartney, then Governor of Madras, wrote a letter of introduction for him, emphasising Hone's skills not only as a painter but also as a 'Musician, a singer an actor, a mimic etc etc' and describing him as 'very amiable'.<sup>67</sup>

Thomas was subsequently a frequent visitor to his namesake, actively proposing commissions.<sup>68</sup> William is known to have commissioned at least seven portraits from him. Patronage based on ethnicity was undoubtedly of prime importance to Hickey, even though the largest ethnic group within the British administration at this time was Scottish. As evident from portraits to be discussed below, Hickey's patrons did include Scots. The Scots held 48% of the administrative posts during Hastings' last years in India. Furthermore, of the free traders given permission to reside in Calcutta, between 1776 and 1785, 60% were Scots whilst of the officer cadets recruited to the Bengal Army in 1782, 49% were Scottish.<sup>69</sup> These were men who would have had the income to commission portraits in oil. By contrast, the majority of Irish in Bengal were ordinary soldiers who had little purchasing power.<sup>70</sup> However of the forty barristers and attorneys attached to the Calcutta courts in the 1780s, six were Irish, one of whom was William Hickey.<sup>71</sup> He, as well as others with connections to the transnational Irish network of patronage, such as the Sullivan family and William Burke, would prove to be important early patrons to Thomas Hickey. Burke, who arrived in Calcutta from Madras in 1784, was re-posted to Madras in February 1789; Thomas Hickey, by then finding his business in decline, sailed with him on board the *Dublin* reaching Madras on 17 March 1789. William Hickey notes that Thomas met with 'encouragement' in Madras through the

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<sup>67</sup> Macartney also mentions that Hone was the son of the portrait painter, Nathaniel Hone (1718-1784) Macartney 1950: 42. Camillus worked in Calcutta from 1782-1790, on his return to Dublin, he became an engraver of dies in the Stamp Office. Unlike Hickey, he supplemented his income in Calcutta by teaching drawing and painting. Archer 1979: 402-3.

<sup>68</sup> Hickey, Vol III 1948: 202, 210.

<sup>69</sup> Coltman 2013: 294.

<sup>70</sup> By law, only Irish Protestants could serve in the ranks or as officers in the Royal Army. From the 1750s, however, covert recruitment of Irish Catholics into the army of the East India Company and British Navy gradually increased, with even greater reliance on Irish soldiers from the time of the American War of Independence. The passing of the Catholic Relief Act 1778 allowed for the recruitment of Irish troops and Scottish Highlanders. From 1778-1779 one third of the soldiers travelling to India with the East India Company were Irish, from 1780-81 it had risen to 45%. Crosbie 2012: 68-98, Jasanoff 2006: 51.

<sup>71</sup> Bailey 2013: 145-6.

‘patronage and warm recommendation’ of Burke.<sup>72</sup> Despite these positive comments, no artworks from this period are known to have survived and Hickey was back in Calcutta by late 1789 or early 1790.

On his return to Calcutta, Hickey painted a portrait of his patron William Hickey (Fig. 2.12). Evidence of the artist’s classical training and adherence to convention can be seen in the swathed column and more obviously in the inclusion of a quasi-antique bust of Edmund Burke. The image may be discussed in terms of friendship and William Hickey’s admiration for Burke, but it is more than that: it is a visual trace of the Irish network under discussion. Not only were the portrait painter, the portrait sitter and the subject of the bust all Irish; so too was the sculptor of the bust since it was the work of John Hickey, brother of Thomas. Furthermore, as William Hickey recorded in his memoirs, the bust was brought to India by William Burke in 1789 and given to him by Burke as a parting gift when the latter left for Madras.<sup>73</sup> Latour considers the strongest networks to be those of an active and distributive materialism, which may be physically traceable and recorded empirically; the latter is exactly what Hickey has demonstrated in the making of this portrait.<sup>74</sup>

An additional international network which offered opportunities to meet potential patrons and raise subscriptions in India, was that of Freemasonry.<sup>75</sup> Despite Hickey’s reputed sociability and the ubiquity of Freemasonry in both Dublin and London, however, there is no evidence to suggest that he ever became a Mason.<sup>76</sup> Freemasonry experienced unprecedented growth during the eighteenth century in both Ireland and Britain. Likewise, lodges existed throughout all levels of British society in India, from the soldiers’ cantonments to the colonial administration. Irish Freemasonry in India was mainly composed of lodges with travelling warrants

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<sup>72</sup> Hickey, Vol III 1948: 349.

<sup>73</sup> Hickey, Vol III 1948: 349.

<sup>74</sup> Latour 2007: 129-32.

<sup>75</sup> The formation of the Grand Lodge of Ireland (the second oldest in the world) was announced in the *Dublin Weekly Journal* 26 June 1725. However, there is evidence of Masonic lodges in Ireland before this date. Hundreds of Irish lodges were established throughout the eighteenth century, meeting in inns, and coffee houses. A Papal Bull of 1826 issued by Leo XII forbidding Catholics from joining secret societies forced many Catholics to resign from their lodges.

<sup>76</sup> Archival searches in both the Grand Lodge of Ireland and in the Museum of Freemasonry in London for Thomas Hickey were both negative. However, record-keeping in the eighteenth-century lodges was not exhaustive.

attached to the army. English lodges with fraternities in India included the Most Ancient and Honourable Society of Bucks, to which William Hickey belonged; he was 'Noble Grand' until accused of un-masonic behaviour. However, the oldest most prestigious lodge in Bengal was the 'Star in the East'.<sup>77</sup> The significance of Freemasonry to artists seeking patronage is underlined by the fact that, prior to his departure for India in 1783, Johan Zoffany (1733-1810) obtained a Grand Lodge certificate of admittance to the third degree of Masonry from his London lodge, the Lodge of the Nine Muses, to use as a means of introduction to his brother Masons in India.<sup>78</sup> Other artists who benefitted from being Masons during their time in India include Arthur William Devis (1762-1822), Robert Home, the amateur artist Charles D'Oyly (1781-1845) and his kinsman George Chinnery (1774-1852).<sup>79</sup>

The establishment of the Asiatick Society in 1784 furnished a further means of introduction to potential patrons. The Supreme Court judge, pioneering philologist and orientalist, Sir William Jones, served as its first president. Membership largely consisted of Company officials, rising from thirty founding members to 110 by 1790. Founded with the aim of pursuing 'Inquiry into The History, Civil and Natural, the Antiquities, Arts and Science and Literature of Asia', the society published its findings in its journal, *Asiatick Researches*.<sup>80</sup> Two of Hickey's early competitors, Zoffany and Devis, became members. Zoffany was nominated by Jones and elected a member in 1784; Jones also seconded the nomination of Devis in 1790. Other artists who joined included Ozias Humphrey, (1742-1810), Thomas Daniell (1749-1840) and Home, who served as its secretary. While the Society did not offer direct patronage, it afforded members an opportunity to meet those with the means to act as patrons. Devis, for example, painted Jones' portrait in 1793. However, once again, Hickey was not a member. Perhaps he could not afford the membership fee; his association with the rakish, hedonistic circle of William Hickey may also have precluded membership of such a learned society.

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<sup>77</sup> Hickey, Vol III 1948: 325.

<sup>78</sup> Travelling and working in Germany, Italy, England and France, Zoffany was a lifelong Mason, belonging to various lodges. Webster 2011: 3,17, 95, 449.

<sup>79</sup> Archer 1979: 299-300, Conner 1993: 129.

<sup>80</sup> Kejariwal 1988: 30-34, 80.

Hickey appears to have operated on the edges of the upper echelons of colonial society in Calcutta. Therefore, when on 12 August 1788, he published *The History of Ancient Painting and Sculpture, from the Earliest Accounts, down to the Period of their Decline in Greece, after the death of Alexander the Great*, he surely did so as a strategic ploy to promote his career. Not only did such a book underline Hickey's scholarly knowledge of both the art and literature of antiquity but it also suggested that the artist was in touch with gentlemanly taste and the ideals of the Grand Tour. Furthermore, its publication provided opportunities to contact influential figures of the day both in Calcutta and London. Hickey dedicated the book to Lord Cornwallis, then governor-general of British India, presumably in the hope of future public patronage. He also gave a copy to Colonel John Murray, adjutant-general of the Company troops.<sup>81</sup> When back in London in 1797, as previously discussed, he sent a copy of his book to Dundas, head of the Board of Control of the East India Company, with a covering letter requesting employment by the Company. The publication of Hickey's book is evidence both of his highly ambitious conception of his profession and his desire to avoid an appearance of provincial Irishness. It also demonstrates how he constantly had an eye to the future as regards employment.

Hickey had started work on his book during the long voyage from Portugal to India, returning to it in Calcutta. As he explained in the preface, 'the polite and liberal access afforded by distinguished gentlemen here with an unexpected supply from their valuable libraries' enabled him to complete the book during the hot season, when 'a cessation of his professional employment' occurred.<sup>82</sup> Hickey subsequently placed an advertisement in the *Calcutta Chronicle and General Advertiser* of 11 September 1788 inviting subscriptions for part one which had just been published, for part two, a considerable portion of which had been printed and for part three which was in 'arrangement with the press'.<sup>83</sup> The latter two parts were never

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<sup>81</sup> Colonel Murray's copy, now in the Bodleian Library, contains an autograph letter in which Hickey writes, 'Dear Sir, I take the liberty of presenting to the perusal of your leisure a portion of work from which I shall be highly flattered if you derive any entertainment'. Cited in J.J.Cotton 1925: 233. See also discussion of McGregor portrait below, pp.106-7. The Murray family later reverted to the name of MacGregor as also discussed below.

<sup>82</sup> Hickey 1788, preface: not paginated. J.J.Cotton has suggested that the library Hickey used was that of Sir William Jones. Cotton 1925: 232-5.

<sup>83</sup> Anon 1788: not paginated.

published. It is not known whether this was due to a lack of subscribers or to Hickey's failure to complete the work. Nevertheless, the significance of Hickey's project is twofold. It shows firstly, that he had access to extensive libraries in Calcutta, presumably replete with Western classical texts, and, secondly, that he believed a market existed for his book amongst the European population. Both facts underline the persistence of the classical model as an ideal amongst the expatriate community, despite the orientalist scholarship being undertaken in Bengal by intellectuals such as Jones and the typographer and scholar, Charles Wilkins.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, the publication of the book in Calcutta and Hickey's use of the press in advertising it underlines the modern, commercial nature of Calcutta society.

Hickey wrote the book in English and Italian, justifying doing so on the grounds that only 'the melody of the Italian language' was suitable for the 'utterance of beauty'.<sup>85</sup> It also served to underline his cultural capital. Writing in Italian demonstrated that Hickey had been in Italy long enough to become proficient in the language, but also, by implication, to gain a good knowledge of the great works of art there. Although Hickey credits the Italians with the revival of the 'beautiful arts' during the Renaissance and argues that ancient works of art 'became the objects of the choicest culture', he also emphasises that the greatest perfection is to be found not in the Roman antique but in ancient Greek sculpture.<sup>86</sup> In addition, although no examples of ancient Greek painting had survived, he affirms that 'we cannot entertain a doubt but that the production of their painters held an equal rank of excellence'.<sup>87</sup> Not only could this excellence be adduced from the testimony of ancient writers but, in addition, a 'standard of corroboration' was found in ancient sculpture itself.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> As governor-general, from 1774-1785, Warren Hastings encouraged the work of orientalist scholars such as Charles Wilkins, the first translator of the *Bhagavad Gita* from Sanskrit into English, and acted as patron to the Asiatic Society.

<sup>85</sup> Hickey 1788, introduction: not paginated.

<sup>86</sup> Hickey 1788, introduction: not paginated.

<sup>87</sup> Hickey 1788, introduction: not paginated.

<sup>88</sup> Hickey 1788: xxiii, xxv.



Hickey makes extensive use of antique sources. He refers to the use that both Giorgio Vasari and André Félibien made of Pliny's *Natural History*, but then underlines his own erudition by stating that, in addition, he will refer to Herodotus, Plutarch, Pausanias and Lucian, sources he may have consulted in Calcutta. His sole reference to a contemporary author is to William Hayley's *Essay on Painting* of 1781.<sup>89</sup> However, although he does not acknowledge him in his text, Hickey also appears to be acquainted with the work of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-68). Given that, when in Italy, Hickey moved in a circle that included Angelica Kauffmann, who in turn was an acquaintance of Winckelmann, then resident in Rome, it is highly probable that he knew of Winckelmann's work. Winckelmann promoted a Greek ideal, asserting that 'Greece was the chosen soil' within which the seed of art had grown.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, when Hickey wrote in the preface to his book, 'however novel the publication may appear in a soil like this', that is to say, on the banks of the Ganges, he may be implicitly contrasting the subcontinent and Greece.<sup>91</sup> In his *The History of Ancient Art* (1764), Winckelmann proposed that, whilst art in its infancy was the same in every nation, it needed suitable conditions, including those of climate, mode of government, ways of thinking, and respect for the use and application of art, in order to progress. In a similar manner, Hickey maintains that it is only within a stable, organised society that the arts 'may unfold their virtues' and develop.<sup>92</sup>

Where Hickey departs from Winckelmann is in his assertion that Greek art had its origins in ancient Egyptian art. Using Herodotus as a source, he claims that the Greeks derived not only their principles of science but also their models of religion and the arts from the Egyptians.<sup>93</sup> Winckelmann did acknowledge that ancient art had its origins in Egypt. However, he denied that Greek artists ever saw examples of Egyptian art, claiming that Greek art developed independently.<sup>94</sup> Winckelmann did not overtly disparage Egyptian art; rather, he believed it to have

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<sup>89</sup> Hickey 1788: vii.

<sup>90</sup> See Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art*, 1764, Book IV, 'Art Amongst the Greeks', extracts quoted in Harrison, Wood and Gaiger 2000, 468-72, p.468.

<sup>91</sup> Hickey 1788, preface: not paginated.

<sup>92</sup> Harrison, Wood and Gaiger 2000: 468. Hickey 1788: v. See section one of this chapter, pp.88-9.

<sup>93</sup> Hickey 1788: vii. See Herodotus, Book 2.4, Holland (trans) 2014: 108-9

<sup>94</sup> Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* 1755, extracts in Harrison, Wood and Gaiger 2000: 450-456: p.452. Bindman 2002: 90.

remained at an arrested stage of development due to external factors including climate and the rigidity of Egyptian law.<sup>95</sup> He used it as a counterpoint to Greek art which, he argued, had passed through a similar 'Egyptian' stage but then progressed to produce art of an ideal beauty consequent on enabling cultural conditions.<sup>96</sup> By contrast, Hickey, drawing extensively on Herodotus, maintains that Egypt, whose arts represented the efforts of the 'most enlightened people' in the ancient world, extended its influence to other nations and 'beamed upon Greece'.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, he argues that colonies from Egypt, once established in Greece, 'nourished the growing arts in Greece, seconded their pursuits, and invigorated their progress'.<sup>98</sup> He elaborates on what he believes to be the early stages of painting in Greece: the drawing of outlines in an initial phase, followed by filling in the lines with one plain colour, known as 'monochromaton [*sic*]', with final phases including the adding of shadow by the use of lines and scratches with perhaps foreshortening and the articulation of joints, distinction of veins and bending of drapery.<sup>99</sup> Hickey believes that art may have reached this stage, 'at a very early progress of cultivated society, not only amongst the Greeks, but in the infancy of any other nation; and it is, perhaps, the very mode of proceeding which, in every country, the art would adopt, independent of communications with more enlightened people'.<sup>100</sup> In other words, painting skills may be apparent in the earliest stages of any society but that progress is furthered by contact with more 'developed' societies.

Given that Hickey wrote his book at a time when British trading interests in the subcontinent were becoming increasingly colonial in orientation, the question arises as to whether he is, in effect, promoting imperial expansion as improving or,

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<sup>95</sup> It is a matter of scholarly debate today as to whether Winckelmann in effect thereby denied an African origin to Greek art which, in its turn, played a foundational role in the Western academic canon. Bernal, vol 1 1991: 212-13. Bindman 2002: 90-1.

<sup>96</sup> Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art*, Book 1, 'The Origin of Art', and the 'Causes of its Differences among different Nations', extracts in Fernie 1995: 73-4.

<sup>97</sup> Hickey 1788: vii.

<sup>98</sup> Hickey 1788: vii

<sup>99</sup> Hickey 1788: xvii, ix. In his description of the drawing of outlines and use of 'monochromaton' colours, Hickey, although he does not acknowledge him, is drawing on Pliny's 'Account of Paintings and Colours', Book xxxv of the *Natural History*. Pliny also retells the legend of the 'Maid of Corinth' which Hickey refers to in his description of the tracing of shadows.

<sup>100</sup> Hickey 1788: xix.

alternatively, whether he is simply offering a close analysis of Herodotus' writing concerning art and ancient empires as evidence of his own erudition. Hickey tightly links the development of the arts and science to the rise and fall of empires, as he describes how the Greeks ultimately superseded the Egyptians in becoming the most 'illustrious' in the arts.<sup>101</sup> However, in the absence of personal papers, it is impossible to know Hickey's thoughts on British territorial expansion in the subcontinent. As regards Indian art, his only known opinion is a wholly conventional one, reflecting the prevailing European view that Indian sculpture was at best curious, at worst monstrous.<sup>102</sup> Writing in 1804 about a series of figure studies he planned to paint, based on Hindu mythology, Hickey drew a clear distinction between learned, Brahminical teaching and the 'barbarous specimens of art, in the sculptured representations with which their temples are so profusely furnished'.<sup>103</sup> It was usual at this time to distinguish between what was considered to be the philosophical religion of the Brahmins and the supposedly superstitious cults of the ordinary people. In the eyes of educated Europeans, the Brahmins benefitted from an ancient reputation, for virtue and wisdom, not least on the grounds that they had been teachers of both Plato and Pythagoras.<sup>104</sup> Thus Hickey planned to base his studies of Indian figures on the Brahmins' descriptions; his intention was to develop their allegorical allusions in order to explore the religious system of Hinduism whilst avoiding the 'reproach of inconceivable idolatry' provoked by the sculpted figures.<sup>105</sup> For Hickey, such 'idolatrous' figures had failed to progress beyond the barbaric. He brought Eurocentric values to bear on the sculptures, judging them by the classicising standards of simplicity, ideal beauty and noble grandeur. It is doubtful whether Hickey understood or credited an alternative regime of taste that valued extensive ornamentation and decoration as found in Indian sculpture. However, although he was scathing in his description, Hickey did at least consider the sculptures as 'art' rather than mere curiosities.

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<sup>101</sup> Hickey 1788: xiii, xxi.

<sup>102</sup> Mitter 1992: 1-2.

<sup>103</sup> Hickey 1804: 4, 6.

<sup>104</sup> Mitter 1992: 49, 178.

<sup>105</sup> Hickey 1804: 4, 6.

When Hickey wrote of his planned series of Indian mythological figures in 1804, he was hoping to be employed as historical painter to the East India Company. His proposal was a direct application for patronage. The publication and distribution of his book, was likewise an exercise in self-promotion. By drawing attention to his erudition, Hickey hoped to attract well-educated, wealthy patrons. He exploited all the resources available to him, including his connections to the transnational network of Irish patronage, as he actively sought work. The extent to which Hickey was motivated by his never-ending search for patronage and financial security cannot be overstated.

### Section Three: An Irish Artist's Indian Portraits

Hickey arrived in Calcutta just as Warren Hastings, who had risen through the ranks of the East India Company to become the first governor-general from 1774 to 1785, was preparing to return to England, mired in accusations of corruption. The subsequent arrival in India in September 1786 of Lord Cornwallis as governor-general marked a turning point both in the commercial affairs of British India and in Anglo-Indian relations. Unlike Hastings, Cornwallis, had been appointed by the Crown, under the provisions of Pitt's India Act 1784, with the primary aim of tackling corruption within the Company. However, having experienced defeat at Yorktown in 1781, during the American War of Independence, Cornwallis was also determined to prevent the formation of a public sphere of debate, whether composed solely of Europeans or in conjunction with elite Indians. At this time, the Company was a controlling organisation; it censored the press, determined where Europeans could reside within its territories, prohibited representative institutions and controlled all British intercontinental trade from India.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, it did permit its servants to trade on their own behalf within India and with other southern Asiatic ports;

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<sup>106</sup> For accounts of the East India Company in this period see Marshall 1987, Bowen 2002: 19-32, Washbrook 2012: 44-74.

independent mercantile companies thus continued to flourish. In a series of moves aimed at preventing corruption, Cornwallis regularised Company salaries, fixed trading prices, discouraged the use of *banians* (money agents) and prohibited private trading on the part of Company servants. Furthermore, high ranking Indians in the civil administration were replaced and pensioned off or demoted, while people of mixed race were excluded from both the civil administration and the army. In addition, the keeping of Indian mistresses known as *bibis* was discouraged and Company servants were now prohibited from wearing Indian clothes in public.<sup>107</sup>

Initially Hickey was busy, being fortunate that the much better known, Zoffany, who was active in India from 1783, spent much of his time in Lucknow whence he travelled to Delhi before returning to Calcutta in 1786. He left for London in 1789. Hickey's main competitor for the portrait commissions that were the staple of his career in Calcutta was therefore Devis, who was active in India from 1784 to 1795. By contrast to Hickey, Zoffany and Devis were well connected; Hastings sat to both artists, as did senior judges, including Sir Elijah Impey and Sir Robert Chambers. As previously discussed, Hickey operated on the edges of the upper echelons of Calcutta society. However, the portraits commissioned from all three artists had features in common. The majority depicted men; very few European women travelled to India at this time. Portraits served similar functions as those commissioned in Dublin or London, recording achievements in public and professional life but also commemorating family events and the private lives of the sitters. Thus, while Hickey produced standard portraits of army officers posing in their uniforms, for example an officer of the Bengal artillery painted in 1780 (fig. 2.13), he also made portraits that suggest more individual interests. Between 1786 and 1787 he painted one of Captain (later Major-General) William Kirkpatrick in civilian dress (fig. 2.14). This portrait highlights not only the sitter's involvement in the founding of the Calcutta Military Orphan Society in 1783, as indicated by the document in his hand, but also the acquiring by the society of two premises, as indicated by the inclusion of their house at Howrah in the background.<sup>108</sup> Apart from

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<sup>107</sup> The original meaning of *bibi*, an Urdu word derived from Persian, was lady or wife.

<sup>108</sup> Hickey painted a further portrait of Kirkpatrick in Madras c.1799-1800. This will be discussed in chapter three, section two, pp.145-9.

the paintings discussed below, other portraits that survive from Hickey's first stay in Calcutta include a double portrait of an unidentified young couple; Charles Brooke playing with the grandson of the Nawab of Murshidabad and Charles Cornwallis Johnston as a child.

However, certain functions of art assumed greater importance or took on a different emphasis in India. Portraits as memorial, for example, took on extra significance in the context of travel to the subcontinent; they commemorated absent loved ones separated by distance as well as travellers who had died. In addition, they were commissioned in anticipation of possible demise. The six-month journey to India was dangerous; passengers were vulnerable to illness, to vagaries of the weather and to attack from foreign shipping since Britain was almost constantly at war with France. Moreover, the mortality rate amongst Europeans in India was extremely high. Portrait miniatures were in demand amongst the expatriate community as souvenirs of loved ones; they were much cheaper than oil portraits, quickly executed, portable, could be incorporated into jewellery, and were easy to send home with friends sailing for England.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the English miniaturist John Smart (c.1742-1811), arriving in Madras en route for Calcutta in 1785, remained there during the ten years he spent in India, such was the demand for his work.<sup>110</sup> When William Hickey travelled to India, via Portugal, for the third time in 1782, he had his mistress Charlotte Barry sit for the fashionable miniaturist Richard Cosway (1742-1821), prior to their departure. The resulting likeness became his 'inseparable companion' after Charlotte died shortly after her arrival in Calcutta.<sup>111</sup> Both she and William sat to Thomas Hickey in Lisbon, and a copy of the latter's portrait was sent to his favourite sister in London.<sup>112</sup> Two of Thomas Hickey's earliest commissions when he subsequently arrived in India in 1784 were further portraits of William and a posthumous one of Charlotte.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Hickey never painted miniatures, but he did paint small oval heads in oils (not in pastels like Hamilton), for example a set of seven heads made for the Bedford family in Portugal, which were easily transported.

<sup>110</sup> Archer 1979: 390-3.

<sup>111</sup> Hickey, Vol II 1950: 362-3.

<sup>112</sup> Hickey, Vol II 1950: 386-7.

<sup>113</sup> Hickey, Vol III 1948: 349.

As well as miniatures and full-scale portraits, artists in India made conversation pieces. On the one hand, conversation pieces served as a memorial to time spent on the subcontinent while, on the other hand, they were indicative of status attesting to the enormous households maintained by Europeans. *Ayahs*, *bibis*, hookah bearers, stewards and pole bearers were all faithfully documented. They had the further advantage that their small scale meant that such works did not appear too ostentatious, a crucial concern for those anxious to avoid accusations of nabobery. From the artist's point of view, a conversation piece made economic sense; often small in scale, it allowed the artist to save on materials which were at a premium in India, and, more importantly, to charge per figure. Kate Retford argues that, for Britons in India, the importance of the conversation piece lay in its capacity to provide contextualising detail, thereby emphasising both the particularities of the 'historical moment' and the contrasting customary practices of Europeans and the indigenous population.<sup>114</sup> She makes the point that due to its ability to combine the narrative features of history painting with elements of genre painting and portraiture, the conversation piece proved to be an extremely versatile sub-genre.<sup>115</sup> As described below, the balance between each element varies within each conversation piece.

The conversation piece was ideally suited to describing a patron's family but could, in addition, serve as a means of displaying his possessions in a polite manner, the emphasis on family working against accusations of immoral luxury. One of Hickey's earliest group portraits made in Calcutta 1785-6 shows seven members of the extended Murray family: John Murray, later General Sir John, his wife Anne, and their *ayah*, celebrating the birth of a son, Evan (fig. 2.15).<sup>116</sup> The overall focus of the painting is strictly on family, as the little boy, supported by both his mother and his *ayah* reaches out to his father. Hickey has taken care in drawing the individual

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<sup>114</sup> Retford 2017:93, 102-7.

<sup>115</sup> Retford 2017: 104.

<sup>116</sup> The family at this time was known as Murray before reverting to their original surname of MacGregor in the 1820s. The surname MacGregor had been proscribed in 1603 by King James VI of Scotland. It was restored by licence in 1822 on the application of the second baronet, Major-General Sir Evan Murray MacGregor, the child in the portrait. The portrait is known today as *The MacGregor Family*.

portraits and painting the draperies of the female figures. His portrait of John Murray, however, demonstrates his ever-present difficulty in articulating legs with the upper body. The men are all in military uniform and the women are well-dressed as befits their status but there are no further suggestions of the trappings of wealth. By contrast, luxury is clearly a preoccupation in a contemporary conversation piece painted by Zoffany, a leading proponent of the genre. Hickey's conversation piece when compared with that of Zoffany, suggests the different types of patronage the two artists could command. Zoffany painted a group portrait of the wealthy, inter-related Auriol, Dashwood and Prinsep families in Calcutta between 1783 and 1787 (fig. 2.16). Unlike the Murray portrait in which the outdoor setting is not shown in any detail, India is clearly indicated by the large jack fruit tree, palm tree and small Mughal tomb in the background. Family members are arranged in small groups in a frieze-like manner on either side of the stylishly dressed, immaculately powdered and coiffed Auriol sisters. The central focus is on the act of taking tea, a luxury item in India at this time as tea was yet to become a cash crop there. Ranged alongside, and every bit as much an indication of status as the silver teapot, are a hookah bearer, a household servant, a liveried pageboy, a *banian* and a messenger. The display of 'exotic' servants, as much as the silver tea canisters fashioned as neoclassical urns, carefully arranged as a still life with the blue and white Chinese porcelain cups and saucers, in front of the sisters in Zoffany's painting, are indicators of material wealth consequent on international networks of trade. If all these features are taken in conjunction with the flanking image of Charles Auriol in his uniform of an officer of the Royal Army, it may be understood that this was trade that was increasingly underpinned by colonial conquest. This is not merely a group portrait of an extended family taking tea; it is both hierarchical in its display of wealth and power and ideological in its implication of the colonising of Indian land. The Hickey group portrait, though more modest, is similarly implicated, it shows a military family. Both conversation pieces are fundamentally, about acquisition and authority.

Although conversation pieces offered European artists the opportunity to paint Indian subjects, oil portraits of individual Indians, other than rulers, were



unusual. One exception was the sub-genre of *bibi* portraits.<sup>117</sup> In the male-dominated society of British Calcutta where portraits were commissioned, painted, and in the main, viewed by men, the appeal of such portraits is evident. In 1787 Hickey painted a picture now known as *An Indian Lady, perhaps 'Jemdane', bibi of William Hickey* (fig. 2.17). The young girl is most probably a *bibi* since an Indian woman would not normally have sat to a European male artist. The identity of the sitter cannot be proven, but, given that Thomas Hickey was a frequent visitor to the Calcutta home of William Hickey, it is possible, as Archer has suggested, that she is William's *bibi*, Jemdane. William reported in his memoirs that Jemdane, 'lived with me, respected and admired by all my friends for her extraordinary sprightliness and good humour. Unlike the women of Asia, she never secluded herself from the sight of strangers...'.<sup>118</sup> In this portrait, the *bibi* is placed on display for a male viewer. She is portrayed as detached and self-absorbed: her gaze does not engage with that of the spectator; with the result that she is very much offered as the object of his attention. What is not immediately apparent to modern viewers, as will be discussed below, is just how risqué the image would have appeared to eighteenth-century viewers.

Although the identity of the sitter is not proven, the carefully painted portrait certainly appears to be that of an individual. One of the few scholars to consider the portrait in depth, Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, argues that Hickey was sensitive to the circumstances of the subjugated population in India as he came from a colonised background himself, and that this fact influenced his approach to Indian sitters.<sup>119</sup> This argument is problematic. The contention of the present thesis is that while 'Irishness' in the latter half of the eighteenth century had a distinct operational value, it did not imply a specifically Irish sensibility.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, though Hickey would have been well aware of the political and economic inequality between Ireland and England and that England governed Ireland, to what extent he would have considered himself to be from a colonised country is a moot point. Grigsby maintains that by portraying the *bibi* as 'substantive, embodied and particular' Hickey is

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<sup>117</sup> An analysis of Hickey's portraits of Indian transitional figures, including the *bibi* and the *banian* discussed below was previously published in McDermott 2016.

<sup>118</sup> Archer 1979: 208. Hickey, Vol III 1948: p.327.

<sup>119</sup> Grigsby 2016: 53.

<sup>120</sup> See chapter one, p.62.

‘unusually respectful of the sitter’, supporting her argument by underlining how carefully he has observed and delineated the young lady’s head rather than focusing on her costume.<sup>121</sup> While he has undoubtedly taken great care, the focus on the young lady’s head is explained by the fact that Hickey had a conventional training in Western portraiture, whereby the painting of the head is prioritised. In certain respects, although of an exotic subject, the image is conventional. Hickey’s palette is muted, the grey-greens and pinks, his tones and hues are all in keeping. If the *bibi* portrait is compared with the portrait of Charlotte Dee, painted by Hickey in 1781 when in Portugal, the same care is apparent in the fine delineation of the sitter’s hair and depiction of her face (fig. 2.11). Furthermore, while the artist skilfully depicts the contrasting textures of the sitter’s draperies, using similar colour harmonies as in the *bibi* portrait, costume is not a distraction. Hickey is certainly respectful in that his treatment of his Indian sitter is similar in many ways to that of his European sitter, but what Grigsby fails to note is the unconventional pose of the *bibi* which, for an eighteenth-century viewer, was central to the portrait’s erotic charge.

The custom, among Indians of all ranks, of sitting on floor cushions posed difficulties for European artists as it disrupted Western hierarchical conventions of composition. In one of his earliest Indian figure studies, painted around 1785, Hickey depicts the toddler Laurence Sullivan with his *ayah* or nurse (fig. 2.18). With its strong vertical and horizontal lines formed by the background pillar and divan, the painting is similar in form to the portrait of the *bibi*. The *ayah*, appropriately in this instance, sits on the toy-strewn floor with her arm outstretched to the child. Unlike the *ayah* whose position within her European employer’s household is apparent from the inclusion of the child, the Indian lady is portrayed on her own. Both young women are sitting cross-legged and, moreover, the *bibi* is obviously barefoot. Respectable young eighteenth-century European women did not sit in this manner. That such a pose could be considered inappropriate, is underlined by the reception of a painting entitled *Attention* shown by George Chinnery (1774-1852) at an exhibition held by the Society of Artists of Ireland in the former Parliament House in Dublin in 1801. (fig. 2.19). Considered to be the most outstanding picture of the exhibition, the portrait

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<sup>121</sup> Grigsby 2016: 56-7

was subsequently bought by the Dublin Society, Nevertheless, despites its success, the portrait was considered risqué.<sup>122</sup> As a contemporary commentator wrote:

The subject is represented by a female figure, sitting or rather lying, upon a sofa - her head reclined over a book – the face handsome and well foreshortened but the shades of too blue a tint and the arms as coarse as house painting. The robe bundled up over the legs, which are crossed in the careless manner which close attention to an interesting novel might be supposed to have effected – nothing that could contribute to richness was omitted in the colouring – yellow shoes – purple robe – ermine – muslins of all kinds and textures – crimson sofa, gilding, carving...<sup>123</sup>

Here, as well as suggesting that the figure's lack of decorum, lying as she is with her legs crossed and skirts not smoothed down, is consequent on the dubious activity of reading a novel, the writer also criticises Chinnery's use of colour.<sup>124</sup> Unlike Hickey's limited but harmonious palette, Chinnery's use of strong discordant hues contributes, in the critic's opinion, to a general air of dissipation. Hermione de Almeida and George Gilpin have made the interesting suggestion that Chinnery, in painting *Attention*, drew on a work known today as *Muslim Lady Reclining* (fig. 2.20) by the Anglo-Italian artist Francesco Renaldi (1755-c.1799).<sup>125</sup> They maintain that the painting was one of two portraits exhibited by Renaldi at the Royal Academy in 1797. Renaldi, who was active in India from 1786 to 1796, did show a portrait entitled *Portrait of an Industany Lady* but it cannot be stated with certainty that the two portraits are one and the same. He had previously sent a portrait of an Indian lady, under the title of *Portrait of a Mughal Lady*, to the Academy exhibition of 1791.<sup>126</sup> Renaldi made several '*bibi*' portraits during his career in India, including *Muslim Lady*

<sup>122</sup> Chinnery as secretary to the Society of Artists was instrumental in the re-introduction of its public exhibitions. He was awarded the Society's silver palette in 1801 and left for India the following year. Chinnery himself had proposed that rather than awarding 'premiums' to the most outstanding exhibits, the Dublin Society should now buy and display them for the benefit of its students. It paid £62.11s 3d for 'Attention'. Conner 1993: 34, 41.

<sup>123</sup> Royal Irish Academy, MS 24.K.14: 251. Entry for 6 July 1801, quoted in Conner 1993: 41.

<sup>124</sup> The exhibition catalogue note to the picture included eight lines of verse which begin, 'The mind enamoured of some fancied tale/Attention leads by magic force along' which had led Conner to suggest that the book in question may have been the *Arabian Nights*. Conner 1993: 41-2.

<sup>125</sup> de Almeida and Gilpin 2005: 296-7.

<sup>126</sup> de Almeida and Gilpin 2005: 296-7

*Seated with a Hookah*, which Archer believed was the portrait exhibited in 1791 (fig. 2.21).<sup>127</sup> Chinnery was a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy, (showing annually from 1791 to 1795 and again in 1798) and presumably was aware of Renaldi's Indian portraits. Obvious comparisons may be made between their work, not only in terms of pose but also as regards Renaldi's use of bright contrasting colours. With his customary emphasis on his sitter's jewellery and exotic accoutrements, such as hookahs with their elaborately coiled pipes and *attardans* or perfume holders, Renaldi's *Muslim Lady Reclining* may be usefully compared to Hickey's *bibi*. Renaldi's image is much smaller in scale, and though Hickey's Indian lady is certainly on display, Renaldi's *bibi* is shown reclining in an enclosed space which, combined with the high viewpoint, increases the voyeuristic character of the picture. Hickey, in a similar manner to Renaldi, may have felt that his Indian figure study permitted a certain latitude as regards pose. Unlike Renaldi, however, he has not prioritised his sitter's jewellery nor has he included sensuously suggestive exotica; his focus is more on costume and contrasting textures of materials.

Costume was an important indication of status throughout the Georgian period especially, as Ruth Kenny has argued, in Ireland where, under the Penal Laws, a large section of society was prohibited from buying property and land.<sup>128</sup> Portraitists such as Hickey, who had received an academic training, would have been aware of Reynolds' *Discourses* in which he maintained that in Grand Manner portraiture the painting of drapery should be generalised and not detract from the subject of the portrait; he insisted that it was only 'the inferior style that marked the variety of stuffs'.<sup>129</sup> The sophistication of the instruction in the use of dry media at the Dublin Society Schools meant that many graduates, including Hickey, obtained the skills to work as a pastellist. The material qualities of pastel and the methods of its application facilitated the depiction of contrasting textures, textiles and costume.<sup>130</sup> As is evident from study of his *bibi* portrait, these were interests that Hickey maintained when he started to work in oils. Thus, his loosely painted swathes

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<sup>127</sup> Archer 1979: 286.

<sup>128</sup> Kenny 2008: 17-27.

<sup>129</sup> Reynolds 1992: 122.

<sup>130</sup> Kenny 2008: 19.

of fine muslin contrast with the edgings of gold ribbon, with the dense nap of the carpet and the hard, reflective surfaces of the metal utensils necessary for the preparation of *paan*.<sup>131</sup>

It was not only when painting aesthetically pleasing subjects such as the 'Indian Lady' that Hickey devoted so much technical skill to his portraits of Indians. His interest in producing closely observed, individuated portraits of Indian subjects is apparent throughout his career in India. Around 1790 Hickey made three portraits: *William Hickey with a Bust of Edmund Burke* (fig. 2.12), *Thomas Graham* (fig. 2.22), and *John Mowbray, Calcutta merchant attended by a Banian and a Messenger* (fig. 2.23). William Hickey commissioned his own portrait, but the details of the latter two commissions have remained untraced. As William was not only acquainted with Thomas through the Irish transnational network of patronage, but also with the Scots, Thomas Graham and John Mowbray, it is reasonable to presume that his connections led to the artist receiving the commissions.<sup>132</sup> Graham, a Company servant, was, with his brother Robert Graham, a partner in the mercantile company of Graham, Mowbray, Graham and Skirrow. Hickey painted the portraits of both Graham and Mowbray at a pivotal moment: not only in the broader context of Anglo-Indian affairs but also in terms of their own mercantile company. In 1791, as a consequence of Cornwallis' reforms, the company went bankrupt, owing an 'immense sum of money' to its creditors.<sup>133</sup> The Mowbray portrait is unusual in the way that Hickey has focused on the interaction between a European and Indians in a mercantile trading house, that is to say a place of work, rather than the more usual domestic or military setting. Moreover, it includes a closely observed portrait of a *banian*; *banians* like *bibis* were transitional figures in the commercial world of Calcutta. As a consequence of the changes introduced by Cornwallis, neither would have a place in the same way in the increasingly imperial British India. Thus, close study of the portrait is illuminating not only as regards art-history, but also in terms

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<sup>131</sup> Many regional versions of *paan* exist in southern Asia. A preparation of areca nuts, spices, sometimes tobacco, is wrapped in betel leaves then chewed and either swallowed or spat out.

<sup>132</sup> Hickey, Vol II 1950: 123,196.

<sup>133</sup> Hickey, Vol IV 1925: 57-8.

of what may be deduced concerning Anglo-Indian relations at a specific historical moment.

The three portraits differ in one further respect. In the portrait of William Hickey, India is effaced; the portrait could have been made anywhere by an artist with an academic training. By contrast, the picture of Thomas Graham includes two identifiable Indian landscape views in its background. Differently again, Indian land is represented in the Mowbray portrait by the inclusion of a map hanging on the wall behind him. The Mowbray portrait merits particular attention not only because it includes a detailed study of the *banian* but also, to depict an identifiable wall map in a portrait of a merchant was extremely unusual. Maps did feature in portraits at this time, but more usually, as rolled out charts, as seen, for example, in Hickey's portrait of David de Pury (fig. 2.9), or globes: in portraits of rulers, military commanders, international traders and travellers. Thus, the paintings of William Hickey and Graham, which are typical of Hickey's portraits of professional European men, will serve as points of comparison to the Mowbray group portrait which will be the focus of the analysis to follow.

The three portraits do have certain features in common. All have the vertical format of a formal portrait but are small in scale. The size of the Mowbray group portrait means that it functions in an intimate manner like a conversation piece. The portraits of both Hickey and Graham follow contemporary European conventions of portraiture in that both men are depicted sitting at the end of a table on which is displayed items that connote either their interests or profession. In Hickey's case, legal documents are scattered across the table and law books are stacked on the floor, whilst tidy piles of documents and books are ranged beside Graham. In contrast Mowbray is seated behind a kneehole desk, though on the wrong side. Mowbray's position and that of the desk pushed close to the picture plane, draw attention not only to the profusion of documents on its surface and spilling out of an open drawer but also to the pile of papers skewered with a metal rod beside an untidy heap of Indian account books on the floor (fig. 2.24). All this is recorded in meticulous detail by the artist. The naturalism of the portrait is remarkable for its time; it extends from the relaxed figure of Mowbray engaging with the *banian* to the

description of the physical setting. Furthermore, nothing in this image is incidental; everything refers to the immediate concerns of those depicted in the room. This portrait is suggestive not only of a place of work but shows that work is actually in progress.

Hickey followed the hierarchical convention of European portraiture by placing Mowbray, the patron, in the centre of the composition, flanked by the messenger in a subservient position behind him and the *banian* to his side. However, the prominence of the desk has the effect of completing a circle of interest which extends from the account books on the floor to the one in the *banian's* hand, to the *banian* himself round to Mowbray and back to the desk. Hickey shows a certain limitation in technical skill in the representation of space, as may be seen by the lack of coherence in the relationship of the map on the wall to the box placed against the wall and to the figures depicted. As in many of his portraits, he has chosen to use a monochrome ground with just enough tonal variation to indicate spatial depth. This is a case of artistic licence on Hickey's part as the interiors of European buildings in Calcutta were whitewashed, but the dark background also provides a perfect foil to the *banian's* wrap, his spotted head-covering and his exuberantly painted *dhoti*, that is, the long strip of unstitched cotton tied round the lower body. All the compositional devices used by Hickey result in the according of equal weight to the figure of the *banian* and to that of Mowbray himself.

The comparative prominence of the *banian* can be underlined by contrasting Hickey's painting with an image made by Devis: *William Dent with his brother John and an Indian Landlord, Anand Narain* also dating from 1790 (fig. 2.25).<sup>134</sup> As both Archer and Beth Fowkes Tobin have suggested, Devis' painting represents British economic and social, even military action in relation to Indian land, given the military uniform worn by John Dent.<sup>135</sup> William Dent was a salt agent in Tamruk and a cargo boat, transporting salt, can be seen on the distant river. Time is collapsed in this composite image since Dent's acquisition of a leasehold for the land, the symbolic

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<sup>134</sup> See also the peripheral position of the *banian* in Zoffany's conversation piece of the Auriol and Dashwood families discussed above, p.107.

<sup>135</sup> Archer 1979: 254-8, Tobin 1999: 132-3.

act of feoffment or sod-turning, the subsequent construction of his classical villa and the visit of his brother are all simultaneously celebrated.<sup>136</sup> However, despite the elite Indian's central position in relation to the Dent brothers and the fact that he was named in the title, William Dent's gesturing arm relegates the landlord to a subordinate role. Unlike the *banian*, who has been positioned as a prominent, active subject in Hickey's representation of a Westernised Indian space, Narain does little more than provide compositional balance to the shield bearer in that of Devis: he is an object of the narrated history rather than its subject.

Hickey could not have portrayed the *banian* in such a manner without the permission of Mowbray. The fact that Mowbray is seated while the *banian* is standing, suggests that Mowbray is the more powerful of the two; his professional reputation is further enhanced by the way that the picture highlights the *banian's* elite status. In Hickey's portrait it is immediately apparent that the *banian* is an Indian of importance from the fact that he is wearing his shoes in the presence of a European; it was a sign of respect in Indian society to remove one's shoes in the presence of a supposed superior.<sup>137</sup> An earlier group portrait painted by Hickey from 1787 to 1788 of Charles Boddam (fig. 2.26), a Company civil servant and linguist, with his hookah-bearer and a *munshi* (Persian scholar) is similar in that it shows a seated European attended by two Indians. Like the *banian* the elite *munshi*, aware of his own status, has not removed his shoes. The standing of the *banian* however, is further emphasised by the volume of material comprising his *dhoti*, wrap and head covering, which, even allowing for exaggeration on Hickey's part, suggests a man of substance. Many *banians* came from the commercial castes while others were drawn from the literate Indian elite; all were involved in the movement of capital, the remittance of money and the supplying of credit.<sup>138</sup> This was a role they had played throughout the period of the Mughal Empire, using a double entry account system

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<sup>136</sup> In her account of this picture, Archer refers to a set of documents held by the British Library that records the terms of the lease of the land by Dent from Anand Narain. Archer 1979: 254.

<sup>137</sup> Cohn 1996: 132-3.

<sup>138</sup> For analysis of the role of *banians* in Anglo-Indian society see Spear 1963: 38, 51-3, 126-8, Marshall 1987: 45-7, Bayly 1990: 106-8, 194, Braudel 1985: 122-5, 153, 163, 219-223, 583-5, 598. For a comparative analysis of the role of *banians* and *dubashes* see Neild-Basu 1984: 1-31.



written in *mahajani* or merchants script in a commercial ledger, the *bahi khata*.<sup>139</sup> Hickey has represented this script in the ledgers heaped at the foot of Mowbray's desk. Prior to the establishment of a direct treasury system in the nineteenth century, the British moved their money, with the assistance of *banians*, via *hundis* or the commercial credit lines of the Indian banking system. Unlike the *dubashes* of southern India who were often employed directly by the Company, Bengali *banians* operated independently, not only supplying credit but also trading on their own behalf. Moreover, they were distinguished from Indian merchants by the personal relationships they built up with the Company, private traders or with Houses of Agency, which were commercial companies and general traders that invested but also lent money. As a mercantile company, Graham, Mowbray, Graham and Skirrow would have been totally dependent on their *banian*.

The care taken by Hickey in depicting the *banian*, in what was first and foremost a portrait of Mowbray at work, takes on an extra significance when considered within the colonial or early imperial context in India. Has the artist presented a portrait of an individual or, is it an image of a 'type', typical of the Enlightenment propensity to document and classify? Hickey was certainly interested in representing typical Indian figures later in his career, as can be seen from the letter he sent to the East India Company in 1804, in response to a public request for the collection of information useful to Company Historiographers, in which he asked to be appointed Historical and Portrait Painter to the Company.<sup>140</sup> Hickey's motivation seems to have been primarily economic, since, he provided a detailed schedule of remuneration. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the previous section, he proposed a series of paintings to be subsequently engraved including 'figures representing the characteristic but select formation of the native Indoo inhabitants; figures corresponding to the different casts [*sic*] by which the Indoos are distinguished' and 'figures of the native Indoos in the drapes peculiar to the several regions, provinces and districts'.<sup>141</sup> However, that was after the turn of the century; to understand

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<sup>139</sup> Bayly 1990: 194.

<sup>140</sup> Hickey 1804.

<sup>141</sup> Hickey 1804: 4,6.

Hickey's painting of the figures of both the messenger and the *banian* in his portrait of Mowbray, it is necessary to return to the earlier moment.

As already noted, it had become increasingly difficult since the mid-1780s for European artists to find work or patronage in Calcutta. They were also in competition with artists of the so-called Company School. Following the closure of the Mughal imperial ateliers, many Indian artists now worked in various roles for the East India Company and for European clients in a European influenced manner. They produced sets of simple images of Indian 'types', engaged in various occupations, usually set against a plain background. Such images, which were produced on a commercial scale in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, were popular with Europeans both for their relative exoticism and for their modest price. John Alefounder (1758-1794) who was active in India from 1785 until his death in 1794, and Devis were the earliest European artists to attempt to exploit this market, but it was the Flemish artist François Balthazar Solvyns (1760-1824) who was the first to complete a systematic portrayal of Indian costumes and trade. In Calcutta, he published *A Collection of Two Hundred and Fifty Coloured Etchings: Descriptive of the Manners, Customs and Dresses of the Hindoos* (1796; reissued 1799).<sup>142</sup> Solvyns drew on Western traditions of costume books and series illustrating different occupations. His work is significant, in that he was the first European artist to try to order his images of Indian subjects, as he understood it, by caste. Unlike such images of types and costumes, the Mowbray portrait was not aimed at a general audience, but consideration of Solvyns' Indian figure studies is relevant when determining if Hickey's images of the messenger and *banian* are portraits of individuals,

Solvyns was by profession a maritime painter, not a portraitist. It would therefore be unwise in terms both of medium and skill to make close comparisons between his attempts to individuate his Indian subjects and those Indians depicted in Hickey's portraits in oils. However, in his original watercolour drawings and Calcutta engravings, he did include a *banian*, whom he placed in a Westernised space seated below a framed maritime painting, perhaps one of his own. Whereas Hickey

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<sup>142</sup> For a comprehensive overview of Solvyns' career see, R.L.Hardgrave. 2004.

used compositional devices to emphasise the *banian's* status, Solvyns showed the *banian* seated, in the suggested presence of Europeans, to indicate that he was an elite Indian, as he explained in the accompanying catalogue.<sup>143</sup> The background painting and seated banian can be seen in a watercolour made by an Indian artist around 1800 which is, in its turn, a composite image based on several of Solvyns' original drawings (fig. 2.27). Solvyns' project had been inspired by the work of Company School artists and his work in its turn was adapted by Indian artists.

Natasha Eaton has argued convincingly that Solvyns' figure studies were 'characteristic' images, that is to say, elements of the typical were emphasised and demonstrable in an individuated subject.<sup>144</sup> Solvyns may have been prepared to manipulate some images, but his original drawings were close studies taken from life and he castigated Western travellers for their inability to accurately represent Indians; he claimed that they produced 'figures whose costume is indeed Indian, but whose shape, complexion and countenance is entirely European'.<sup>145</sup> Romita Ray has suggested that an additional tendency amongst Western painters of this period was the 'flattening out' of Indian skin colour which resulted in the 'locking of the 'native' figure into a consistent shade of brownness'.<sup>146</sup> Consequently, the singularity of the individual was lost. Bearing both criticisms in mind it is necessary to return to Hickey's depiction of the Indian messenger and the *banian*.

Consideration of the Mowbray portrait shows that Hickey has carefully contrasted the silky sheen of the messenger's deep pink *jama* or surcoat, his sash and fine orange-gold spotted shawl, the gold of which is echoed in the gold-ribbon trim of the *jama*. However, it is the depiction of the swathed, tucked and draped folds of the *banian's dhoti* and wrap on which he has invested his greatest effort and technical skill. Thin layers of white paint merge into thicker bands of bright white which give structure and edge to the fabric (fig. 2.28). Whilst similarities may be seen

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<sup>143</sup> Hardgrave 2004: 274-5.

<sup>144</sup> Eaton 2014: 54-5.

<sup>145</sup> Solvyns published a further set of four volumes of his prints in Paris: *Les Hindous* 1808-12. A pirated version of his work was published in London by Edward Orme: *The Costume of Indostan* 1804-5. This quotation is taken from the Preliminary Discourse to *Les Hindous*, Volume One (1808) as it appears in Hardgrave 2004: 124.

<sup>146</sup> Ray 2013: 25.

in the depiction of material draped over the *banian's* shoulder and the *bibi's* shawl, the handling of paint in the *banian* figure is on the whole much firmer. Hickey's only departure from technically demanding 'white on white' distinctions is the *banian's* spotted head covering, the tail of which may be seen poking out from under the draped white fabric. Hickey's interest in costume was not of course limited to his Indian subjects. In a contemporaneous portrait of the Calcutta hostess Frances Johnson, known as the 'Begum Johnson' painted around 1790, he displayed the same bravura in the rendering of layers and ruffles of white fabrics of differing texture and weight (fig. 2.29). However, to devote such attention to an Indian subject was unusual. Furthermore, both the *banian* and the messenger are highly individuated both in terms of finely painted facial features and in varying skin tone. The detailing of account book, keys and stylus behind the *banian's* ear should not be considered merely as the accoutrements of a generic 'type' but rather serve to connote his profession in a similar manner to the papers strewn across Mowbray's desk. Taken in conjunction with the compositional devices used by Hickey to represent the *banian* as a prominent subject in a Westernised space, his treatment of costume as well as the carefully painted profile declare this a closely observed portrait of an individual (fig. 2.30).

Detailed analysis of the image considered within the specific historical context of its making just prior to Cornwallis' act prohibiting private trade on the part of Company servants, underlines the close association of Mowbray and the *banian* rather than distance between them. Of further significance, given the increasingly colonial orientation of the British in India is the map that features prominently in the background of the portrait. A European convention in the conceptualisation of space and place, the topographical map assumed prime importance as territorial expansion in India quickened in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. As Edney has shown, science and art came together in the formation of maps which were deeply ideological, not least because they were believed to epitomise European rationality.<sup>147</sup> Mowbray may have requested the inclusion of the map as an indication of his trading interests, but he is also showing off a prestigious possession: wall maps

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<sup>147</sup> Edney 2003: 72-76.

were expensive, rare items.<sup>148</sup> Hickey has depicted the map in such detail, that, although previously unidentified, it is now possible, by comparing the shape, outlines, colours and titles of the painted map with actual maps, to identify it as *A Map of Bengal, Bahar, Oude & Allahabad with Part of Agra and Delhi Exhibiting the Course of the Ganges from Hurdwar to the Sea* by James Rennell, engraved by William Faden, and published in two sheets in London in 1786 (fig. 2.31). Rennell, who was the surveyor-general of Bengal from 1767-77, made the first regional survey of Bengal from 1765-71.<sup>149</sup>

Rennell made topographical maps based both on military route surveys and celestial measurements taken at specific points to determine latitude and longitude. Whilst in Bengal he had conducted much fieldwork but the maps he drew in London, including that depicted by Hickey, were based on a vast collection of material including maps, charts, landscape views and sea journals deposited in India House.<sup>150</sup> Rennell divided his maps into provinces based on Mughal land divisions called *subas* which dated from the time of Akbar (1556-1605) and named them in regular type. By contrast, he indicated the contemporary Indian polities by the name of their ruler in cursive type.<sup>151</sup> This detail may be seen in Hickey's representation of the map in Mowbray's portrait, both in the differential colouring of the provinces and in the inclusion of script, for example 'BERAR'. The significance of the *suba* is twofold; firstly, it suggested a 'legitimate' transfer of power from the Mughal Empire of the Golden Age of Akbar, bypassing the despotic present, to the British and secondly, it corresponded to an area of revenue collection. Thus, the map on Mowbray's wall is cadastral, that is, it serves as a register of land for the purpose of taxation. However, at a time when Company activity was determined by revenue collection (and just prior to the implementation of the Act of Permanent Settlement 1793 which had devastating long term consequences for land management, particularly in Bengal), its cadastral function is significant. The inclusion of the map implicates Mowbray in proto-imperial structures of power.

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<sup>148</sup> Edney 2003: 68-9.

<sup>149</sup> Edney 1997: 9-13.

<sup>150</sup> Edney 1997: 98.

<sup>151</sup> Edney 1997: 11-13.

Made within the powerful institution of the East India Company, Rennell's maps, portable forms of Western knowledge, presented a constructed 'reality' of the subcontinent as a coherent, unified entity. However, maps were not the only means by which Europeans created an India understandable to Western eyes: artists constructed landscape views which were dependent on well-known conventions of both making and seeing. As previously noted, Hickey's portrait of Thomas Graham contains two landscape views. Within the painting, the curtained window frames an image of a classical villa complete with pediment and columns. A second view is afforded by the framed picture on the wall, which Archer has suggested depicts a view of Benares (Varanasi) by William Hodges.<sup>152</sup> Graham was the British Resident at Benares from 1777-80 and, although he was removed from the post when charged with irregularities, it would be an appropriate choice of background image, more particularly since he denied the accusations. Hodges, who travelled to Benares with his patron Warren Hastings as part of the latter's entourage during his campaign against Raja Chait Singh, made many drawings of Benares and neighbouring forts on the Ganges. He subsequently worked up and engraved his Indian drawings as forty eight aquatints which were published in two volumes in London between 1785 and 1788 as *Select Views of India: Drawn on the Spot in 1780-1783*. In addition, his prints were also readily available in the Calcutta bazaars.<sup>153</sup>

Benares was a highly significant spiritual site for Hindus but it was also of symbolic importance to Europeans as it exemplified the then widespread belief that Hindu society represented an ancient civilisation existing in the present. This belief was reiterated by Thomas Hickey in his aforementioned letter to the East India Company of 1804 in which he proposed paintings based on the native 'Indoo inhabitants'. In Hickey's view these would offer an illustration of 'the general history of India at its earliest stages as the figures relate only to the delineation of the native aborigines [Hickey's emphasis] who have continued from the remotest periods of record, a separate and distinct people unaltered by any foreign mixture'.<sup>154</sup> In

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<sup>152</sup> Archer 1979: 215.

<sup>153</sup> Eaton 2003: 61.

<sup>154</sup> Hickey, 1804: 7-8.

addition, since the last of the great Mughal Emperors, Aurangzeb had built a Mosque on the site of the Visvanatha Temple in Benares, the city had come to reinforce a European eighteenth-century stereotype of the spiritual values of the Hindu in contrast to what was perceived as the destructive influence of Islam and the Mughal Empire.

In the juxtaposition of images within the overall portrait of Thomas Graham, Hickey has thus depicted on the one hand a classical building which, to Western eyes, was evidence of a rational and ordered colonial built environment, and on the other a landscape view that implicitly served to characterise Indian society as by turns spiritual and unchanging, destructive and latterly in the case of Raja Chait Singh, despotic. It may be tempting to consider these 'truths' and even Rennell's map in terms suggested by Said in *Orientalism*, whereby the supposed superiority of the coloniser is reinforced by a differential comparison made with an inferior colonised 'other'.<sup>155</sup> However, the evidence contained in Hickey's art suggests a more complex relationship, particularly in his compelling image of the manifest, active presence of a powerful indigenous elite in the form of the *banian*. To the extent that the Mowbray portrait has been commented on in the literature, it has been made to serve as an illustration of the public and private trading practices of East India Company servants.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, in so far as relationships of power within the Indian colonial context have been considered, there has been a tendency to misinterpret the image as evidence of an over-arching thesis about British domination of, and distancing from, its Indian subjects.<sup>157</sup> As has been shown, Hickey's group portrait is more complex than any reductive reading would allow. Hickey's representation underlines the inter-dependence of Mowbray and the *banian* rather than their disassociation during this crucial period of transition in Anglo-Indian affairs. To analyse the portrait of *John Mowbray, Calcutta merchant attended by a Banian and a Messenger* in terms of a totalising colonial discourse denies the heterogeneity and social divisions of both British colonial and Indian society. Furthermore, it ignores the incommensurable if overlapping epistemologies suggested by the syncretic

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<sup>155</sup> Said 2003: 3,7.

<sup>156</sup> Archer 1979: 215-217, Howes 2011: 10-11, Bayly 1990: 107-8.

<sup>157</sup> Smylitopoulos 2012: 13-14.

British/Mughal map and that of the indigenous financial system personified by the figure of the *banian*. Hickey has represented a Westernised, colonising social space: a space contested in terms of varying regimes of power but also one where subjects previously separated by geography and history met and were constituted by their interlocking relationships with one another.

The subjects in this case not only include Mowbray, the messenger and the *banian* but also the Irish artist Thomas Hickey and potential spectators.<sup>158</sup> As previously discussed, the Irish colonial experience was characterised by proximity to, and the longevity of, its relationship with England, such that the eighteenth-century art worlds of both countries were tightly linked. However, significant differences did exist. A consideration of the local in terms of both Irish art training and networks of patronage contributes to an understanding not only of what Thomas Hickey made during his time in Calcutta but also the significance of how he did it. In terms of the former, the most rewarding analyses have been of those portraits that contain Indian figures; for it is here that Hickey has employed the best of his technical skill and paid greatest attention to detail. By virtue of close visual analysis and situating Hickey's work in the specific context of late eighteenth-century Calcutta it has been possible to demonstrate the inadequacy of considering such images as merely illustrative of imperial histories. On the contrary, as has been shown, they are complex agents of meaning production in their own right.

### Conclusion

Said, writing about the historical novel as a work of art, argues that it is not adequate to think of such art solely in terms of an internal coherence; rather both national and international contexts relevant to its making must be considered if arts' 'worldliness' or complex affiliations with its real setting is to be understood.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, it is not enough to analyse Hickey's Calcutta pictures in terms of formal qualities, aesthetic

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<sup>158</sup> In despair, shortly after the bankruptcy of the mercantile company in 1791, Mowbray and Robert Graham died from alcohol poisoning whilst Skirrow went temporarily insane. Hickey, Vol IV 1925: 57-8. It is thought that the picture was brought back to England by Mowbray's daughter in 1818. It remained in the family until it was presented to the British Library in 1938 where, today, it is on display in the Boardroom.

<sup>159</sup> Said 1994: 13.



values or verisimilitude. It is only by considering the local contexts he brought to the works, in terms of his training in Dublin and links to the transnational Irish network of patronage, as they intersected with over-arching themes of the British Empire, that the complex meanings of his Calcutta paintings are revealed. Hickey left England for India at a time when attitudes towards British activity in India were marked by ambivalence; the East India Company may have been portrayed as benevolent towards the indigenous population but its servants were increasingly seen as corrupt. He arrived in Calcutta as reforms aimed at counteracting corruption and improving efficiency came into effect, ultimately resulting in a distancing of Indians from Europeans. However, the complicated relationship between Britons and Indians, that may be deduced from his portraits at this specific historical conjuncture, is one of interdependence.

Hickey's Indian paintings, for example, those of the *bibi* and *banian*, are important because they portray transitional figures whose place in British colonial society in India would, with time, irrevocably change. Moreover, Hickey himself was a transitional figure; never again would so many Irish and British portraitists seek their fortune in India. His paintings made in Calcutta are illuminating not only in terms of differential relations of power but also the fluidity of Anglo-Indian relations at that time. Hickey's long Indian career, interrupted by seven years spent in London, China and Dublin, spanned a period of transition as Britain's commercial interests in India became entwined with those of imperial ambition. In terms of the nexus of art and empire, the significance of Hickey's Indian portraits rests in the fact that he painted them as Britain's policies in the subcontinent increasingly became those of conquest and territorial expansion. By contrast to his Calcutta paintings, though certain of his later portraits made in Madras suggest a continuing interdependence amongst the British and elite Indians, a distinct imperial register becomes evident in the work of Hickey and other artists active in India in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

### Chapter Three

#### An Imperial Turn: Madras 1798-1824

Hickey's Indian portraits are fruitful areas of study given that he was active in India at pivotal moments as British activity in the subcontinent moved from being predominately commercial to conquest and colonisation. In addition, he worked in two very different Presidency towns: Calcutta and Madras. Therefore, the paintings that Hickey produced in Madras may be compared and contrasted in terms of time, place and content, with those he made in Calcutta. Furthermore, the type of patronage he received in the two towns differed; from the time of his arrival in Madras, Hickey benefitted not only from private patronage, as in Calcutta, but also from public commissions. The public commissions that Hickey received in Madras, at a time of accelerated British expansion in the region, prompt the question whether his work may be analysed in terms of an 'imperial aesthetic' symptomatic of the wider processes of empire as previously discussed in the introduction to the present thesis and chapter one.<sup>1</sup> A key theme throughout this chapter therefore will be the question of the emergence or otherwise of an imperial dimension within British art, and whether Hickey's work was a part of it.

British policies in the region at this time were becoming increasingly imperial in ambition. Prior to his departure from England, Hickey, concerned about his prospects of employment, had unsuccessfully applied to the East India Company for a salaried position. What he could not have predicted was that he would be the only professional artist on the spot at the outbreak of the Fourth Mysore War on 5 March 1799. Thus, the first section of this chapter considers the public commissions Hickey received in the wake of the British victory in Mysore, highlighting the distinct 'imperial turn' in terms of content and display of official portraiture in British India. In the second section, portraits painted by Hickey as the British surveyed new

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction pp.20-7, chapter one pp.50-62.

territories in the aftermath of the War will be assessed in relation to British colonial expansion. Close analysis of the paintings will draw attention not only to the role of elite Indians in the collection of useful colonial knowledge but also to the competing forms of knowledge on display within the pictures themselves.

### Section One: Tipu Sultan, Marquis Wellesley and Imperial Propaganda

On 2 August 1797 Hickey had been granted permission by the East India Company to return to India. Further permission for his two daughters to accompany him was granted on 28 February 1798 and in November of that year Hickey arrived in Madras. He would have become quickly aware of the singularity of Madras, not only in terms of its relationship both with Calcutta and London, but also with reference to the various Indian groups in the town itself and the neighbouring Indian polities.<sup>2</sup> Fort St George in Madras had been the first independent centre of English influence on the subcontinent. However, the British never developed an expatriate commercial and manufacturing base in southern India comparable to that of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, by contrast to Calcutta where administrative posts tended to be occupied by civilians, similar positions in Madras were often held by suitably qualified military personnel. This militarisation of the administration was due in part to the fact that as Calcutta superseded Madras as the centre of British interests in India, the career prospects for servants of the East India Company in the Madras Presidency had correspondingly declined. A potential lack of advancement, together with the complexity and multiplicity of languages spoken in Madras deterred many from applying to work in the region.<sup>4</sup> Thus, by contrast to the ever-shifting British population in Calcutta an

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<sup>2</sup> See Washbrook 2004: 479-95 for an overview of the East India Company in Madras in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries.

<sup>3</sup> Washbrook 2004: 492.

<sup>4</sup> Persian was the administrative language of British India until it was replaced by English in 1837. Vatuk 2009: 49. In Bengal, Hindustani, derived from Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, was widely spoken. In the Madras Presidency the predominant languages included Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada.

almost dynastic dominance by a few families in both trade and Company affairs developed in Madras.

As in Calcutta the population of Europeans was relatively small but whereas there the European presence was predominately British, Madras included a significant number of other Europeans including Portuguese, Dutch, Danish and French, all of whom had well established trading links in the region.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, diversity marked southern Indian society; the region had not only traded with Europeans since the sixteenth century but also had a long history of internal trade throughout the subcontinent. In addition, southern India benefitted from well-established trade links via the Indian Ocean to Persia, the Levant, south eastern Asia and China. Migration and warfare, including the spread southwards of the Mughal Empire at the end of the seventeenth century, contributed to the mix.

Anglo-Indian relations were correspondingly complex. Writing about the colonial transition in southern India from 1770 to 1840, David Washbrook describes Anglo-Indian relations during this period as 'multi-layered', 'nuanced' and 'variegated'.<sup>6</sup> As British power in India increasingly shifted to Calcutta throughout the eighteenth century, Company servants in Madras came to resent the influence of both Calcutta and London in their affairs. Reforms concerning Anglo-Indian relations, introduced by Lord Cornwallis during his tenure as Governor-General were therefore largely ignored.<sup>7</sup> At a local level questions of gender and class were often more important than race. Unlike in Calcutta, sexual relations with Indian *bibis* were not discouraged. The system of using *dubashes* as money agents and the need for Indian informants continued unabated. The wealthiest men in Madras included Indians, some of whom employed Europeans. Elite Indians and Europeans met publicly whilst a few Indians even went so far as to question East India Company policy in southern India. Moreover, British power in the region was not secure. Surrounded by some of the largest princely states in India, including Hyderabad, Baroda, Travancore and Mysore, all of which were jostling for power as the Mughal Empire declined, the

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<sup>5</sup> Under the terms of a treaty negotiated with Mir Jafar in 1757, the French were excluded from trading in Bengal. Losty 1990: 33. See Washbrook 2004: 493, for a discussion concerning Europeans in Madras.

<sup>6</sup> Washbrook 2004: 497.

<sup>7</sup> Washbrook 2004: 484-7, 489.

Madras Presidency was under continual threat not only from the hostile state of Mysore to its west, under the reign of Haydar 'Ali and his successor, Tipu Sultan, but also from the confederacy of Maratha states in western and central India. Alliances not only between the various Indian polities but also with the British were continually being made, broken and remade. This volatile political situation was exacerbated by the ongoing hostilities between the British and Revolutionary (later Napoleonic) France, a fact exploited by the Indian states, particularly by Tipu Sultan. The Mysore court sustained contact with the French over four decades from the 1760s onwards. In 1787 Tipu Sultan sent an Embassy to the Court of Louis XVI at Versailles. In 1797 a Jacobin Club was established in Seringapatam and a Liberty tree planted.<sup>8</sup>

Under Richard Colley Wellesley, Earl of Mornington, who succeeded Sir John Shore as Governor-General in 1798, British policies in the region became increasingly aggressive and expansionist.<sup>9</sup> In contravention of Pitt's East India Act (1784) which prohibited the initiation of military action by the British in India, Wellesley arrived in Madras in December 1798 to supervise the assembling of a large army in preparation for war against Mysore. He subsequently legitimised his actions on the grounds of Mysore's French connections and, in particular, with reference to a letter from Napoleon pledging support for Tipu Sultan in his campaign against the British in India, which had been intercepted at Jeddah on 17 February 1799. Wellesley, an Irish peer, would also have been aware of the failed French expedition to Ireland of 1796 in support of the United Irishmen.<sup>10</sup> Thus, from his point of view, the French posed a threat both at home and on the subcontinent.

The French had intervened in Mysore on a previous occasion. British forces suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Haydar 'Ali, Tipu Sultan and the French commander of their troops, General Lallée, at Pollilur during the Second Mysore War (1780-1782). Cornwallis subsequently led the British to victory during the Third Mysore War which was fought from 1790 to 1792. On 4 May 1799 the Fourth Mysore War erupted as British troops with their allies, the soldiers of the Nizam of

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<sup>8</sup> Jasanoff 2006: 151-6.

<sup>9</sup> Sir John Shore served as governor general from 1793-8 after Cornwallis returned to England.

<sup>10</sup> The landing of a large French expeditionary force under General Hoche at Bantry Bay was thwarted by bad weather.

Hyderabad, stormed the fortress at Seringapatam (Srirangapatna), Tipu Sultan's island capital. Tipu Sultan was killed during the battle. As plunder and prizes began to arrive back in London, 'Tipu mania' swept the capital resulting in unprecedented interest in India and most particularly in the figure of Tipu himself.<sup>11</sup> The storming of Seringapatam inspired plays, songs, prints and paintings, the design of ceramics and even dress fashion. In 1799, Philip Astley's popular play, *The Siege and Storming of Seringapatam*, complete with live horses and explosive devices, was staged at the Amphitheatre Royal in Dublin. The Indo-Persian traveller Abu Talib Khan, then visiting Dublin, stated, rather ambiguously, that he had been 'much affected' by the performance.<sup>12</sup> Abu Talib Khan had arrived in Cork from India, travelling through Ireland to Dublin en route to England. In an example of 'reverse ethnography', he criticised the English for their prejudices against the Irish. He also unfavourably compared the lot of the Irish peasant with that of the Indian peasant.<sup>13</sup>

Tipu Sultan was not unknown to the Irish or British public prior to the taking of Seringapatam. His image as a cruel despot had been reinforced by accounts written by British prisoners captured and held in Seringapatam after the loss of the Second Mysore War. However, it was not until the aftermath of the Third Mysore War that visual artists became interested in Tipu Sultan and Mysore. At this time, two of Tipu's sons were held as hostages by the British until their father fulfilled the requirements of the peace agreement. The subject of the 'hostage princes' was tackled by various artists in England including George Carter (1737-1794) and Henry Singleton (1766-1839), but it was Robert Home in India who produced the most ambitious image. Home, having arrived in Madras in January 1791, quickly obtained permission to join the Grand Army at Bangalore where it was engaged in hostilities against Tipu Sultan, staying with it for the duration of its campaign. Between 1792 and 1793 Home completed his version of the subject of Cornwallis receiving the 'hostage princes' (fig. 3.1). He subsequently produced a volume of engravings based on his sketches entitled *Select Views of Mysore, the Country of Tippoo Sultan*,

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<sup>11</sup> Buddle 1999: 64-6.

<sup>12</sup> Jasanoff 2006: 175, Kahn 2009: 36-40. Abu Talib Kahn wrote an account of his travels which was translated from Persian into English by the Belfast-man Charles Stewart and published in 1810.

<sup>13</sup> Malik 2010: 191-2.

publishing it simultaneously in London and Madras in 1794, with an accompanying text written in both English and Persian targeting both European and elite Indian audiences.

Home included approximately thirty recognisable portraits of both Britons and Indians in the picture, drawing on the descriptive text of his as yet unpublished book as well as on his numerous sketches. He depicts himself as an onlooker at the edge of the scene; a portfolio tucked under his arm suggests that he has been engaged in sketching the participants. Details such as the guy rope of Cornwallis' tent slicing across the lower left-hand corner of the picture reinforce the sense of an on-the-spot record of events. The figures are grouped in a frieze-like arrangement with depth and exotic interest provided by the princes' escort of lavishly caparisoned elephants and camels. The incorporation of members of Tipu's army who would not actually have been present at the event provides anecdotal interest. They include a rocket-man, shown with his back to the spectator with his rocket and characteristic flag, and an infantry-man.<sup>14</sup> Both are dressed in a distinctive uniform made of cloth incorporating the *babri* pattern of stylised tiger stripes.<sup>15</sup> Known as the 'Tiger of Mysore', Tipu decorated textiles, army uniforms, swords, guns, cannons and his throne with tigers, tigers' heads or stylised tiger stripes. The head of the tiger often comprised features in the form of a calligram, which may be read as the initial H, for Haydar, Tipu's father or as reference to the Prophet's son-in law Ali known as Haydar, the Lion of God. The tiger was also a powerful emblem within Hinduism; it was linked to the vengeful goddess Kali and also to Hindu kingship. Tipu Sultan as the Muslim ruler of a predominately Hindu state employed a complex iconography which not only embraced both religious traditions practised in his kingdom, but also reinforced his image as a fierce and aggressive opponent. By registering this iconography within his picture, Home underlined the significance of the British victory over a powerful enemy.

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<sup>14</sup> Rockets were traditionally used by Indian armies. Tipu Sultan modified his rockets using Western technology. Stronge 2009: 21-3.

<sup>15</sup> Stronge 2009: 29-41, Buddle 1999:22-28.

Home's picture is a large modern history painting, a type of painting closely bound up with national rivalries and imperial ambitions. Therefore, the main focus is on Cornwallis as he receives the younger of the two princes Muiz-ud-din, who is offered to him in an open-handed gesture by Tipu's lame *vakil* (senior minister), Ghulam Ali Khan, who is depicted in his silver carrying-chair. The move is seemingly supported by Mir Alam and Buchaji Pundit, representatives of the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Maratha Peshwa respectively. Sir John Kennaway, Resident at the Nizam's court holds the hand of the elder prince Abdul Kaliq. Thus, the representatives of Mysore willingly hand over the 'hostage princes' into Cornwallis' quasi-paternal care. Home subsequently exhibited the painting with a companion piece, known today as *The Death of Colonel Moorehouse [sic] at the Storming of the Pettah Gate of Bangalore, 7 March 1791* in 1797 at the Royal Academy (fig. 3.2).<sup>16</sup> The composition of Home's *Death of Colonel Moorehouse* is directly based on Benjamin West's the *Death of General Wolfe*, painted in 1770 (fig. 3.3). West's painting not only celebrated a British victory over the French but one that took place outside Europe. The central figure in Home's painting is posed in the same pietà-like manner as General Wolfe.<sup>17</sup> Thus, on the one hand through his paternal image of Cornwallis, Home has portrayed Britain's role in India as benevolent; on the other hand, he shows the redemptive self-sacrifice of a British officer in India as Bangalore is captured.

Home's paternalistic portrait of Cornwallis receiving the 'hostage princes' was consistent with a line of images including Hayman's painting of Clive receiving Mir Jafar following the Battle of Plassey (fig. 2.4) and Rennell's cartouche (fig. 2.6) in which British interests in India had been, for the most part, shown as benevolent and/or paternal with Indians willingly submitting to British rule. After the conquest of Mysore in 1799, however, Anglo-Indian relations were presented in terms of

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<sup>16</sup> The Freemasons in Madras commissioned the painting, as Moorhouse had been their Grand Master. Archer 1979: 300.

<sup>17</sup> One of the few contemporary paintings to depict a battle scene from the 1798 Rebellion by the United Irishmen, Thomas Robinson's *The Battle of Ballynahinch, 13 June 1798*, also draws on Wolfe's picture. Captain Henry Evatt of the Monaghan Militia, resplendent in powdered wig, red coat and sash, supported by his colleagues in a similar pietà-like pose, makes the ultimate sacrifice. His figure may be contrasted with that of the dishevelled captive rebel leader Hugh McCulloch, seen to the extreme left of the image.



conflict. Conflict was presented as spectacle by the Scottish artist, Robert Ker Porter in his panorama, *The Storming of Seringapatam*, which opened in the Lyceum in London in 1800. Porter's panoramic view stretched across a vast semi-circular canvas which measured 21 feet high and 120 feet long and had to be moved on rollers. The curved picture surface and the lack of frame together served to enhance the illusion of being at the centre of the action. The spectator standing on a viewing platform was prevented from coming close to the painted image; this, combined with the curved surface, made judgement of any perspectival distance difficult. Spectators were surrounded by pictures on the enormous canvas, suggesting cannon fire and smoke; clashing scimitars and bayonets; red-coated soldiers, troops in Highland dress and sepoy's battling Tipu's army; the mayhem and confusion all observed by Tipu himself on the ramparts of the fortress.<sup>18</sup>

The panorama not only served to promote imperial pride in London, the capital of empire, but also travelled to Edinburgh, Belfast, Dublin and Cork. In 1801 it arrived in Dublin where it was displayed in a building specially erected for the purpose in College Green, opposite the newly redundant Parliament House.<sup>19</sup> A contemporary observer in Dublin noted: 'You are placed as it were in the middle of the battle before the ramparts and without the danger view precisely as in reality, the whole tumult of such a scene'.<sup>20</sup> Thus the Dublin viewer expressed what literary scholar Markman Ellis has suggested was 'the immersive sense of place' characteristic of a panorama's all-embracing view.<sup>21</sup> It may be argued that mass entertainment and the sublime came together in Porter's panorama: for the entrance cost of one shilling spectators could experience, with frissons of delightful horror, a great British victory against an oriental despot – and all at a safe distance. As Burke wrote: 'terror always produces delight when it does not press too close'.<sup>22</sup> Like Astley's play discussed above, Porter's panorama was a commercial venture that banked on the British and Irish public's appetite for excitement and spectacle. Unlike

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<sup>18</sup> See Archer 1979: 427-8, Rohatgi 1999: 51-2, Stronge 2009: 81, Jasanoff 2006: 175, for accounts of the panorama.

<sup>19</sup> For accounts of Porter's panorama in Ireland see Black 2006: 13, Cullen 2012: 55.

<sup>20</sup> Anonymous diarist 1801 in Cullen 2000: 241-2.

<sup>21</sup> Ellis 2004: 136.

<sup>22</sup> Burke 1990: 41.

officially commissioned works of imperial propaganda, it was neither constrained by artistic convention nor did it provide any moral justification for imperial expansion. As the panorama moved around the country, its popular appeal and accessibility ensured its success as an example of unofficial imperial propaganda.

Consideration of the panorama highlights one further point: the preponderance of high-ranking Scottish officers engaged in various roles in Mysore. As a Scottish artist Porter may have included soldiers in Highland dress out of national pride, but he got much of the detail of the assault from the surveyors, Major Alexander Beatson and Major Alexander Allan, both Scots, who had arrived in London from Mysore in February 1800.<sup>23</sup> Details seen in the painting include that of the Scottish officer, Lieutenant Farquhar of the 74<sup>th</sup> Highland Regiment of Foot expiring behind a closely observed representation of one of Tipu's tiger-muzzled cannons. Other prominent Scots included Major-General David Baird, who had led the attack on Seringapatam, and Lieutenant-Colonel William Kirkpatrick, Wellesley's military secretary. As the panorama indicates, British society in Madras was dominated by military personnel who were also for the large part, Scottish. It is unlikely that the fact of Hickey's Irishness would have encouraged the aristocratic, Anglo-Irish Wellesley to offer him patronage, particularly given that Wellesley tended to downplay his own Irish background.<sup>24</sup> However Hickey was the only professional artist on-the-spot; thus, he was granted access to Wellesley, General George Harris, other important participants, including the Scots mentioned above, and to members of Tipu's family and household held captive at Seringapatam and Vellore for the purpose of drawing their portraits.<sup>25</sup>

Hickey was extremely fortunate that Home, who had many prominent patrons in the town, left Madras for Calcutta in 1795. He had been in London in 1797 when Home sent his painting of the 'hostage princes' and that of the death of Colonel Moorhouse to be exhibited at the Royal Academy. Hickey almost certainly saw the two pictures, which possibly provided the inspiration for his own comparable project.

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<sup>23</sup> Rohatgi 1999: 52.

<sup>24</sup> See below, p. 134, concerning drawings by Hickey of Majors Beatson and Allan.

<sup>25</sup> Harris was Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army and temporary Governor of Madras at the outbreak of hostilities.

Following the defeat of Tipu Sultan, he quickly advertised a scheme of ambitious history paintings in the *Madras Courier* 10 July 1799 and later in the *Calcutta Gazette*, 17 October 1799. Hickey proposed a series of seven paintings ‘from the details of the Victory [of Seringapatam] on the 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1799, and the successive events connected with it’, inviting subscriptions for subsequent engravings to be executed by ‘eminent artists in London’.<sup>26</sup> Hickey’s ambitious scheme was intended to consist of ‘The Storming of the Breach at Seringapatam’, ‘The interview with the Princes at the Palace’, ‘The finding of Tipoo’s body’, ‘The first interview of the commissioners of Mysore with the family of the Raja’, ‘The funeral of Tipoo’, ‘The reception of Lieutenant Harris with the Colours of Tipoo in Fort St George’, and ‘The placing of the Raja on the *Musnud* (the ‘cushion of honour’ which was symbolic of kingship) of Mysore’. Hickey also drew attention to his scheme’s high-ranking patrons, the Earl of Mornington, Governor-General of India and Lord Clive, Governor of Fort George. Using the skills developed during his early training in the Dublin Society Schools in dry media, Hickey subsequently completed fifty-five preparatory studies in chalk. Most are simple head and shoulder portraits, but some of his sketches, for example that of Muhammad Subhan Sultan, sixth son of Tipu, show the sitter full-length and include detailed notes of costume (fig. 3.4). However, Hickey never realised his project. He may have failed to attract enough subscribers; a further possibility is that he lacked the technical skill necessary to complete such an ambitious project. A pencil sketch for ‘The reception of Lieutenant Harris with the colours of Tipoo in Fort St George’ (fig. 3.5) that has survived shows recognisable figures based on Hickey’s chalk portraits such as that of Major Beatson (fig. 3.6) but also underlines his difficulty in drawing anatomically accurate legs and organising numerous figures.<sup>27</sup>

Another reason may have been that Hickey was simply too busy. For the first time in his career he was in receipt of several, prestigious public commissions. On the

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<sup>26</sup> Anon 1799a not paginated.

<sup>27</sup> Thirty three of Hickey’s chalk portraits of British subjects are currently in the collection of the Duke of Wellington. In 1956, the then Duke sent seventeen chalk portraits of Indians involved in the battle to India in exchange for Hickey’s portrait of Richard Colley Wellesley painted in 1800. I would like to thank George Breeze who, having studied the chalk portraits in the Duke’s collection, has drawn my attention to the probable identity of the subjects in Hickey’s pencil sketch: from left to right, the Hon. Frederick North, Major Beatson, Lieutenant Harris and Major Allan.

day that he announced his scheme of history paintings, prominent members of the British community in Madras commissioned a portrait of Wellesley from him which was to be completed in time for the first anniversary of the fall of Seringapatam on 4 May 1800. The life-size portrait shows Wellesley seated on a verandah at Government House in Fort St George (fig. 3.7). On a table beside him lies the Treaty of Mysore while in the grounds beyond, the old Union flag comprising the crosses of St George and St Andrew flies above Tipu's captured standard of red cotton, which features a white radiated sun. The spire of St Mary's Church is seen in the background, thus not only establishing the site of the image as Madras but also creating a connection between Wellesley, the victor of the Fourth Mysore War, and Moorhouse, the hero of the Third, who was buried there.<sup>28</sup> The portrait is worked up from one of Hickey's sketches but, as H. D. Love commented in 1903 'the figure is small, slender and faultily drawn' with 'white waistcoat and breeches which are painted as if they formed a combination garment'.<sup>29</sup> Hickey often had problems with legs and hands, but this is not the only oddity. The scale of the figure in relation to the table, treaty and draped column is too small, whilst the parapet with its classical urn is incorrect in terms of perspective. Hickey's own technique may have been at fault but it is possible that he employed assistants to paint the background as he was so busy.

Wellesley was not the first Governor-General in India to sit for his portrait while in office. Warren Hastings sat to most of the artists who travelled to Calcutta during his tenure. Hastings encouraged the exchange of portraits when negotiating with various Indian rulers, thus circumventing the strictures of the Regulating Act (1773), which forbade Company servants to receive gifts of money, land or jewels. As Natasha Eaton argues, in his use of portraits of himself as 'tribute-images' Hastings not only skilfully mimicked the Mughal custom of 'gifting' inalienable objects but also adopted the promotion of a 'cult of sovereignty' by George III whereby the king sent copies of his portrait by Allan Ramsay (1713-1784) to various British colonies (fig.

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<sup>28</sup> The East India Company erected a memorial to Moorhouse in St Mary's Church with Britannia placing a wreath on his head.

<sup>29</sup> Love 1903: 32.

3.8).<sup>30</sup> However, none of Hastings' portraits were put on public display, unlike Wellesley's portrait by Hickey which was displayed alongside those of military commanders in a prominent colonial space. As previously discussed, in the context of Ireland, images in series of men serving the British Empire asserted colonial authority.<sup>31</sup>

The most interesting feature of Wellesley's portrait is its contemporary reception and display. The *Madras Gazette* reported that, to celebrate the victory at Seringapatam a royal salute had been fired at noon 4 May 1800 at Fort St George and the portrait of Wellesley had gone on display for public inspection. The account continued:

This superb picture, which in point of design and execution, does no inconsiderable credit to the pencil of Mr Hickey, is placed in a magnificent frame, at the Southern extremity of the Exchange, opposite to the picture of Marquis Cornwallis.<sup>32</sup>

The pictures in the Exchange also included portraits of Major-General William Medows, Sir Eyre Coote and Major-General Sir Arthur Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington).<sup>33</sup> The Madras paintings were subsequently moved in 1802 to a new Banqueting Hall, where they were exhibited alongside portraits of King George III and Queen Charlotte. The Hall, designed in the form of a Greek temple and rendered in 'Madras stucco', had been commissioned by Lord Clive to commemorate the victory over Mysore.<sup>34</sup> On its opening, Clive declared it to be 'the most magnificent and beautiful specimen of architecture which the Sciences and taste of Europe have ever

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<sup>30</sup> Eaton 2004a: 816-844, Eaton 2008: 63-93, Eaton 2013: 151-194.

<sup>31</sup> Examples in Ireland discussed in the introduction to this thesis p.29 and chapter one pp.53-4, include vice-regal portraits in Dublin Castle, the Mansion House in Dublin and, regal, ducal and judicial portraits in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin. Clark 2016: 61-89, Fenlon 2016: 179-97.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Cotton 1924: not paginated.

<sup>33</sup> The portraits of Cornwallis and Medows, were commissioned from Home in 1792, that of Coote in 1795. The latter was a posthumous portrait, Coote, an uncle of the artist had died in 1783. He served in India from 1756-62 and fought at the Battle of Plassey, returning to India in 1779 as Commander-in-Chief of the army of the East India Company. Medows was the Governor of Fort St George from 1790-92. The portrait of Arthur Wellesley is by John Hoppner RA.

<sup>34</sup> Its architect was John Goldingham, an astronomer and engineer with the East India Company. The Banqueting Hall is known today as Rajaji Hall. Madras stucco or *chunam* was made from ground sea shells, sand and hemp resulting in a hard, white render resembling marble.

exhibited to the natives of India'.<sup>35</sup> The pediment over the principal entrance showed trophies and spoils from Seringapatam while the pediment at the opposite end displayed those from Plassey. Both battles marked significant events in Anglo-Indian relations. Plassey resulted in the granting of the *diwani* of Bengal to the British, after which revenue collection dominated the affairs of the East India Company; Seringapatam was a direct act of imperial conquest legitimised by Britain's ongoing war with France. Architectural historian, Sten Nilsson described the hall as 'a Heroeum, a neoclassical temple for hero worship'.<sup>36</sup> To contemporary European observers the Banqueting Hall would have been redolent of Western civilisation and ancient empire.

Wellesley's portraits were increasingly performative of empire in terms not only of display but also of content. Between 1799 and 1804, Home painted three full-length portraits of Wellesley (who was now back in Calcutta), including one painted in and around 1801 that depicts him with his hand resting on the final treaty made with the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1800 and the rolled-up treaty of Mysore (fig. 3.9). He is resplendent in the robes and regalia of the chivalric Order of St Patrick; from the collar hangs a large medallion surmounted by an Irish harp, a shamrock lies in its centre with a crown in each leaf representing the separate kingdoms of Ireland, Scotland and England, all are superimposed on the saltire or red cross of St. Patrick.<sup>37</sup> Given Wellesley's reaction to receiving a second Irish peerage after Seringapatam, 'my double gilt potato', it may seem odd that he chose to be portrayed in the ceremonial robes of a Knight of St. Patrick.<sup>38</sup> However, the jewels of the collar, star and badge had been given to Wellesley by the East India Company, and were reputed to have come from Tipu Sultan's treasury.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the spoils of imperial conquest are inscribed on his own person. If the Home portrait is considered in conjunction with the display of the Hickey portrait in Madras, both point towards the emergence of a

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Love 1903: 53.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Groseclose 1995: 34.

<sup>37</sup> The Illustrious Order of St Patrick was created by George III in 1783.

<sup>38</sup> As quoted in Jasanoff 2006: 181.

<sup>39</sup> Jasanoff 2006: 362, footnote 91, Cullen 1997: 103, Longford 1969: 103.

well-defined imperial register within the overarching aesthetic of classicism on the subcontinent.

Wellesley's self-presentation not only took an imperial turn through his trappings of state but also, on his return to Calcutta, he set about an ambitious building project having houses demolished to make way for a new Government House and drawing up plans for a summer residence in Barrackpore. Lord Valentia, an admirer of Wellesley's 'genius', rejected the commercial values of the East India Company when he remarked on visiting the new Government House in 1803 'I wish India to be ruled from a palace, not from a counting house; with the ideas of a Prince, not with those of a retail dealer in muslins and indigo'.<sup>40</sup> Valentia admired the main state room, with its rich Persian carpet in the centre of which was a '*musnud* of crimson and gold' taken from 'Tipoo Sultan's throne' and on which was placed Wellesley's chair and stool of state.<sup>41</sup> To further commemorate his victory over Tipu, Wellesley commissioned a series of sixteen portraits from Hickey, of Tipu Sultan's sons (fig. 3.10), members of his household and the Raja of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wadiyar III (fig. 3.11), who had been recently installed by the British. The sixteen half or three-quarter-length pictures, worked up from Hickey's chalk drawings, were delivered to Government House in Calcutta in 1805 to be framed by Home.<sup>42</sup>

Hickey's drawings and paintings of the main protagonists, both Indian and British, engaged in the battle of Seringapatam are important because they were produced on the scene, or very nearly, of the battle. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the battle Hickey had access not only to the court of the newly incumbent Raja at Mysore but also to elite Indians visiting Madras, including the son of Mir Alam, the representative of the Nizam of Hyderabad. He also painted Purnaiya, a controversial figure, who had served variously as head of revenue collection and of the treasury and military planning under Tipu but nevertheless, subsequently became *dewan* or

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<sup>40</sup> Annesley, Vol 1, 1809: 253, 235-6. George Annesley, Earl of Mountnorris, Lord Valentia was an Anglo-Irish peer and was one of the first to go on an alternative Grand Tour to India. Accompanied by the artist Henry Salt, he travelled through India, Ceylon, Abyssinia and Egypt from 1802-6 and subsequently published a three volume account of his travels.

<sup>41</sup> Annesley, Vol I, 1809: 61.

<sup>42</sup> Archer 1979: 223.

prime minister to the young Raja.<sup>43</sup> Purnaiya was one of the few of Tipu Sultan's high-ranking servants to survive the war, having been engaged in negotiations with the British prior to the Battle of Seringpatam.<sup>44</sup> Some of Wellesley's staff viewed him with suspicion, but in the main he was admired as a shrewd negotiator. In his portrait of Purnaiya, Hickey, once again, displays his interest and skill in the depiction of contrasting textures and fabrics (fig. 3.12). A red stole, edged in red and green is softly draped across the heavy gold silk brocade of Purnaiya's *jama*, falling in folds over his arm; the carefully painted greens and gold highlights of his turban provide colour harmonies with the upholstery of the divan behind the figure.<sup>45</sup> Purnaiya's rich clothing and *tilaka* (the ochre mark on his forehead) declare him to be an elite Hindu. The inclusion of a statuette of Justice placed on a marble plinth behind the divan implies that a sense of justice characterised the sitter. Other portraits by Hickey also featured items indicative of a sitter's character, Hickey's portrait of Burke and Fox for example, shows a small statue in a background niche believed to be of Cicero, suggesting Burke's power as an orator (fig. 2.7). However, the prominence accorded the statuette in the portrait of Purnaiya is unusual, both in terms of scale and position within the picture. The lack of spatial depth to the composition has the result that Justice's head and that of Purnaiya, which are at the same height, appear closely aligned. This emphasis on justice may be due to nothing more than the idiosyncrasies of the composition; nevertheless, there is an ambivalence to the play between the classical statuette and the elite Indian.

In addition to the court at Mysore, Hickey had access to the court of the Nawab of the Carnatic in Chepak Palace in Madras.<sup>46</sup> Consideration of the portraits Hickey painted for the Nawab introduces the subject of Western-style portraits commissioned and used in diplomatic gifting by Indian rulers as discussed above.<sup>47</sup> Hickey painted a head and shoulders portrait of the Nawab, Azim-ud-duala (r. 1801-

<sup>43</sup> For an account of Purnaiya's career under Tipu Sultan see Hasan 1971: 333-4, 357.

<sup>44</sup> Bennell 1952: 127-30. Hasan 1971: 307-8.

<sup>45</sup> The *jama*, a garment of Mughal origin, came to be worn by both Muslims and Hindus. It typically had long sleeves, and a close-fitting bodice with a skirt that flared from the waist, reaching to either mid-calf or the ankle.

<sup>46</sup> The Carnatic comprised the district surrounding Madras.

<sup>47</sup> See p.135 above and introduction, p. 22.



19) around the time of the Nawab's succession in 1801 (fig. 3.13). He then painted a full-length portrait of the Nawab with his son and heir Azam Jah (r.1820-25) in 1803 (fig. 3.14). Hickey was one in a line of Western portraitists who painted the Nawabs of the Carnatic. In 1768, the then Nawab, Muhammad Ali Kahn, sent the gift of a jewel to King George III. The King responded with the gift of two portraits of himself and Queen Charlotte. The Nawab's response to the portraits was guarded. 'I never saw such pictures which are indeed of an exceeding good shape'.<sup>48</sup> Prior to the introduction of large scale European-style portraits, the only life-size Indian portraits, made in lacquer on cotton cloth, were found in the Rajput courts; but these followed the artistic conventions of the idealised portraits found in Mughal miniatures as discussed below.<sup>49</sup> By happenstance the English portraitist Tilly Kettle had arrived in Madras in 1769 and the Nawab sat for two life-size portraits one of which was subsequently exhibited at the Society of Artists in London in 1771 where it was the first portrait of an Indian ruler and his family to go on public display; the other was exhibited in 1775 (fig. 2.3).<sup>50</sup> As previously noted, Hickey may have seen these portraits as he was living and working in London at the time. However, it was the Scottish artist George Willison who benefitted most from the Nawab's patronage. Between 1774 and 1775 he painted six portraits of the Nawab and his family, one of which was sent as a gift to George III, another to the East India Company which displayed it at their offices in Leadenhall Street in London (fig. 3.15). Willison painted at least five more portraits of the Nawab's family from 1774-80; including one of Muhammad Ali Kahn with his second son, Amir-ul-umara and grandson, Abdal Ali Kahn who later became known as the Nawab, Azim-ud-daula (fig. 3.16). Hickey's portrait of Azim-ud-daula which shows his son holding on to his father's robe owes an obvious debt to the Willison image. As the grandson of Muhammad Ali Kahn, Azim-ud-daula would have understood the use of European-style portraits in the processes of diplomatic gifting; he subsequently gave the dynastic portrait of himself and his son to Lord Clive on his retirement in 1803. The Nawab's sovereignty was

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<sup>48</sup> Muhammad Ali Kahn quoted in Love 1913: 79.

<sup>49</sup> Llewellyn-Jones 2008: 100. Chapter three pp.148-9.

<sup>50</sup> For accounts of Kettle and Willison's careers in Madras see Archer 1979: 67-72, 100-4.

nominal; the real power in the region lay with the British Governor of Madras so he may have done so in the hope that Clive would speak on his behalf to his successor.

Mildred Archer and Natasha Eaton have both suggested that Kettle's portraits of Muhammad Ali Kahn provide the prototype for those by Willison.<sup>51</sup> It is equally probable that the original prototype was that of George III by Ramsay. This is most obvious in the Willison picture of 1775 which was presented to the East India Company. However, all show the sitter in a similar pose with one arm outstretched, the other bent to varying degrees whilst many include a draped column in the background. The identity of both the King and the Nawab is suggested by emblems of rank. George III wears ermine robes and the collar and garter of the chivalric order of the Knight of the Garter whilst the Nawab is distinguished by his dynastic pearls, jewels, sword and turban ornaments. Hickey's painting, a closely observed portrait of the corpulent Azim-ud-duala, clearly descends from these earlier images. In his depiction of an Indian ruler Hickey has similarly drawn directly on Western conventions of courtly portraiture in terms of pose, emblems of rank and setting of heavily draped column. The portrait of the Nawab may be contrasted with the portrait of Mowbray and the *banian* (fig. 2.23.) discussed in chapter two, where Hickey could not draw directly on convention; rather, he had to use considerable ingenuity in his according of equal weight to the figure of the *banian* with that of Mowbray as both were central to the narrative. He suggests the *banian's* active involvement in a European place of work not only by the means of formal features such as his position within the composition and the prominence of his account books but also by deploying the best of his technical skill in the depiction of the textures and details of the *banian's* costume. All of which, combined with the accoutrements of his profession, indicate the *banian's* status as an elite Indian.

In the aftermath of the defeat of Tipu Sultan, Hickey earned prestigious commissions from both the victorious British and high-ranking Indians as they competed for positions within and alliances with the new dispensation. He also painted more modest portraits including a small oil of the civil servant, James Brodie

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<sup>51</sup> Archer 1979: 102. Eaton 2013: 160.

(fig. 3.17), a small portrait in chalk of Josiah Walsh, former Chief Secretary of Madras and by then British resident at Mysore; an oil portrait of Mrs Freese, a friend of Arthur Wellesley; a portrait of Benjamin Roebuck, military paymaster in Madras; and one of Captain Peter Rainier, an officer of the Royal Navy (fig. 3.18). The form of Hickey's practice in Madras differed from that in Calcutta, in terms both of patronage and of his own social mobility; the functions that his pictures were intended to serve also differed. In both towns, portraits were commissioned as souvenirs of time spent on the subcontinent but, whereas many of his Calcutta paintings served as exercises in self-promotion for the merchant classes, civil servants and legal practitioners, self-promotion intersected with a distinct 'imperial turn' as regards content, display and use in propaganda in Madras.

## Section Two: Surveys and Control

By now an ambitious, expansionist colonial power in the region, the British conquest of Mysore resulted in new demands being placed on the Madras Presidency as it attempted to administer the new territories. Consequently, the collection and collation of useful information concerning the local topography, socio-economic conditions, historical development and customs, much of which derived from existing indigenous sources, became an imperative.<sup>52</sup> During his time in Madras, Hickey produced two group portraits that in different ways offer some insight into Anglo-Indian relations and the role of an indigenous elite in the collection of knowledge at this time. A further group portrait of three young Indian women also draws attention to competing forms of knowledge; in this case, in terms of European and indigenous medical practice.

Two of the portraits that Hickey painted in Madras are of particular interest because they feature Indian associates of the British sitters. The portraits in question are of two officers of the East India Company's army who were actively engaged in

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<sup>52</sup> Bayly 1996: 7-29.

the collection of necessary colonial knowledge: Lieutenant-Colonel William Kirkpatrick (fig. 3.19) and Colonel Colin Mackenzie (fig. 3.22). Kirkpatrick was a gifted linguist, fluent in Persian, Hindustani and Bengali. As it was customary in this period for the most able officers to be assigned non-regimental duties, he served as Persian translator to General Harris and as Military Secretary to Wellesley during the Fourth Mysore War.<sup>53</sup> Following the British victory at Seringapatam, Kirkpatrick was charged not only with the supervision of the division of Mysore between the newly incumbent Raja, the East India Company, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Marathas, but also with the dispersal of Tipu's library.<sup>54</sup> Mackenzie, a mathematician, engineer and cartographer, had joined the Madras Engineers in 1782. Hickey painted Mackenzie's portrait in 1816 prior to his departure for Calcutta as the newly appointed Surveyor-General of India.<sup>55</sup> However, the portrait commemorates Mackenzie's role in the Survey of Mysore which he had conducted from 1800 to 1810. Both officers have chosen to include Indian associates in their portraits. The Indian figures may merely serve as a reminder of time spent in India. By considering however, both the manner in which the Indians are portrayed and what it suggests about the role of indigenous assistants in the collection of information at a time of increased aggression and imperial expansion, the analysis below offers a more nuanced interpretation.

Much has been written in the context of post-colonial studies concerning the reinforcing and self-perpetuating relationship of power, knowledge and conquest. More specifically, scholars have noted how, in the process of selecting and collating local knowledge provided by Indian assistants, in order to support the administration of conquered territory, the information was translated into forms such as surveys and maps which presented a colonial 'reality' readily accessible to Europeans.<sup>56</sup> This collated knowledge in its turn facilitated further conquest. The historian, Nicholas Dirks has argued that the production of colonial knowledge therefore, represents a

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<sup>53</sup> Archer 1979: 224-5.

<sup>54</sup> Bennell 1952: 127-9, Stronge 2009: 56-7.

<sup>55</sup> Edney 1997: 150-3.

<sup>56</sup> See for example, Said 2003: 73-92, Inden 1986: 401-46, Cohn 1996: 16-56, 78-105. All three acknowledge their debt to Foucault and his insights into the relationship of knowledge and power and the construction of 'reality' within powerful institutions. Foucault 1977: 194.

form of 'epistemological violence'.<sup>57</sup> Not only was the need to draw on the skills of indigenous assistants progressively obviated but, moreover, indigenous ways of thinking were ignored and/or replaced by those of the coloniser. Other scholars including historians C. A. Bayly, Philip Wagoner and Norbert Peabody, whilst agreeing that colonial knowledge played a fundamental role in the consolidation of colonial rule, have underlined the fact that rather than being mere passive providers of raw data, indigenous intellectuals actively processed information, bringing their own forms of knowledge to bear on the subject and, often pursued local agendas as they did so.<sup>58</sup> Wagoner has highlighted the complexity of Anglo-Indian relations in this period of accelerating British territorial expansion, noting 'significant elements of continuity, epistemic and otherwise, running across the presumed colonial divide'.<sup>59</sup> Peabody, in addition, argues that internal differences within Indian society itself must be considered, drawing attention to the need to consider not only 'colonially constituted' social and political change but also indigenous power struggles and social divisions.<sup>60</sup> However, of particular relevance to the discussion of Hickey's pictures that follows is work centred on the Madras Presidency.

The approach of the British administration in Madras differed so much from that of Calcutta that Thomas Trautmann has posited the existence of a distinct Madras school of Orientalism.<sup>61</sup> In its intellectual institutions Madras emulated Calcutta. Thus, the Madras Literary Society founded in 1812 was modelled on the Asiatick Society and the college at Fort St George on that of Calcutta's Fort William. The court of the Nawab of the Carnatic also functioned as a centre of learning in Persian art and literature. However, what distinguished the Madras school was that it viewed India from the perspective of southern India rather than Calcutta. In Fort William for example, arriving cadets were taught Persian and Hindustani, the languages of the Mughal courts. By contrast, in Madras, F.W. Ellis and his Indian head masters whilst offering Persian, Hindustani, Sanskrit and latterly English also promoted the teaching of two southern languages, Tamil and Telegu. Fort St George

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<sup>57</sup> Dirks 1996: xii

<sup>58</sup> Bayly 1996, Wagoner 2003: 783-811, Peabody 2012: 75-98.

<sup>59</sup> Wagoner 2003: 784.

<sup>60</sup> Peabody 2012: 77.

<sup>61</sup> Trautmann 2009: 1-23.

encouraged language-based orientalist scholarship; such scholarship was enabled by and served the needs of an increasingly powerful colonial administration. Thus, the Madras school may be considered orientalist in the Saidean sense.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Mackenzie's survey furnished necessary knowledge. Kirkpatrick, for his part, collated, edited and presented a selection from a thousand of Tipu's letters which he published in 1811 for the 'information of the public'.<sup>63</sup> The letters served to legitimise Wellesley's assault on Seringapatam, but also provided a context within which images of Tipu would be read. Kirkpatrick chose letters which, he believed, underlined his 'genius' but also exposed aspects of his behaviour that reinforced the metropolitan perception of Tipu, as a 'cruel relentless enemy' an 'intolerant bigot' and 'religious fanatic'.<sup>64</sup>

Hickey painted the group portrait now known as, *Lieutenant-Colonel (later Major-General) William Kirkpatrick with his assistants*, between 1799 and 1800 (fig. 3.19). Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, one of the few contemporary art historians to write about the painting, has argued that it represents the British and their Empire in India, claiming that the emptiness at the left of the image evokes a lack or absence, a sense of loss of family and home on the part of the sitter.<sup>65</sup> However, this is perhaps to over-interpret the image as the indoor/outdoor composition is conventional, if by then slightly old-fashioned. As in the Wellesley portrait discussed above, it serves to establish a sense of place: a distant vista, of elephants, sepoy and a European-style villa at the foot of St Thomas' Mount sets the scene in colonial Madras. Hickey had previously painted Kirkpatrick's portrait around 1786 in Calcutta and the sitter has visibly aged since then (fig. 2.14). Kirkpatrick is depicted in the uniform of an officer with the army of the East India Company as befits his military career whilst the table, covered in a heavily fringed cloth, displays books, documents in Persian and letters indicative of both his administrative role and intellectual concerns. However, the balanced composition is disrupted by the insertion of various Indians grouped behind the table to Kirkpatrick's left. Archer suggests that the Indians are Kirkpatrick's

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<sup>62</sup> Said 2003: 1-9.

<sup>63</sup> Tipoo Sultan 1811, preface by Kirkpatrick: xxiii. For a discussion of chrestomathy see Said 2003: 128-9.

<sup>64</sup> Tipoo Sultan 1811: x.

<sup>65</sup> Grigsby 2016: 61.

assistants.<sup>66</sup> By contrast, Grigsby proposes that Hickey demonstrates how, in her words, 'Kirkpatrick is capable of containing the dense heterogeneity of this population, even imposing a semblance of order upon India's complex society'. Both interpretations are plausible to a certain extent. Whilst Kirkpatrick had an intellectual interest in Indian languages and Persian literature he is not considered to have had any empathy with or interest in Indian society.<sup>67</sup> Whether he would have acknowledged his assistants, as Archer suggests, by paying to have them included in his portrait is doubtful. Likewise, if the group was meant to stand for the variety inherent to Indian society, as Grigsby argues, a group of 'types' would surely suffice rather than the individuated portraits Hickey has painted. As previously noted, it was accepted practice for an artist to charge per figure; thus, for Kirkpatrick to commission so many Indian portraits would possibly suggest a more personal reason.

It may be that in a similar manner to Kirkpatrick's uniform and the items on the table, the Indian figures form part of a visual biography. Kirkpatrick was the natural son of Colonel James Kirkpatrick, a cavalry officer who had raised the first troop of cavalry in Madras in 1748. He was born and raised in Dublin until his father arranged a military cadetship for him with the East India Company. In 1771 Kirkpatrick arrived in India. By 1781 he was a Captain with the 6<sup>th</sup> Bengal Native Infantry, rising to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel with the 12<sup>th</sup> Bengal Native Infantry by 1799.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the inclusion of two Bengal sepoys wearing their characteristic 'sundial hats' may suggest his regimental career.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, as Madras cavalrymen in the early 1800s still wore red turbans the figure between the two sepoys may allude to Kirkpatrick's father.<sup>70</sup> Archer suggested that the figure behind Kirkpatrick's shoulder was a Hindu assistant. Given that his *jama* is shown tied to his right, he may be Muslim, as Hindus tied theirs to the left.<sup>71</sup> More relevant for a biographical interpretation is that he wears a cap-like turban such as was worn both

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<sup>66</sup> Archer 1979: 226.

<sup>67</sup> Dalrymple 2004: 65-9.

<sup>68</sup> Archer 1979: 211, Dalrymple 2004: 62-3.

<sup>69</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bengal Native Infantry were amongst the sepoy regiments that fought at Seringapatam, therefore Bengal sepoys were in Madras at this time.

<sup>70</sup> Reid 2009: 24,44.

<sup>71</sup> Cohn 1996: 131.

in Hyderabad where Kirkpatrick was British Resident to the Nizam's court from 1793-7, and in Mysore where he had served as Military Secretary to Wellesley. Given Kirkpatrick's interest in Persian, the most probable explanation for the two bearded figures, one in the yellow-faced jacket of the Bengal Native Infantry, is that they are Persian *munshis* as Archer suggested.<sup>72</sup> *Munshis* held a very high status in indigenous Indian society; they were respected not only as translators and scribes but also as experts in diplomacy. Most British officials depended on *munshis* for complex translations from Persian to English. Kirkpatrick was an exception in being fluent in both cursive Persian and the highly specialised form used in letter writing.<sup>73</sup> He would have been taught the latter by *munshis*, and, in his edition of Tipu Sultan's correspondence acknowledges the assistance given by Meer Husain Ali, a 'very intelligent Musulman' in the employ of Mackenzie.<sup>74</sup>

However, what is of greatest interest is not the identity of the Indians but the way that Hickey has painted them (fig. 3.20). Each portrait is highly individuated. Once again, in a similar manner to the portrait of Mowbray and the *banian*, Hickey has employed equal if not more technical skill in painting his Indian figures whilst also paying close attention to detail. Thus, for example, in the portrait of the sepoy staring directly out at the viewer, the tassel of his turban is carefully delineated and the insignia of his battalion are clearly marked on the turban's leaf-shaped badge. 'Sundial hats' were actually turbans of stiff fabric tightly wrapped; the upward pointing leaf was often rendered by artists as a triangle hence the nickname.<sup>75</sup> The ochre *tilaka* in the middle of the sepoy's forehead stretches exactly from his hairline to the top of his nose as was the custom. Each individual is closely observed with variations in skin colour, physiognomy, age, beards and moustaches faithfully recorded. The older *munshi* appears to be blind. In addition, the manner in which Hickey has positioned the figures in relation to each other and to Kirkpatrick is noteworthy; they are positioned at different heights allowing each face to be clearly seen. Furthermore, the figures are all placed at different angles; thus, they are all

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<sup>72</sup> After 1796 all sepoys with the Bengal Native Infantry wore tunics with yellow facings. Reid 2009: 18.

<sup>73</sup> Bayly 1996: 144.

<sup>74</sup> Tipoo Sultan 1811: Appendix xii.

<sup>75</sup> Reid 2009: 43.



looking in different directions and seen variously in full profile, three-quarters profile and in a frontal view.

An intriguing possibility is that Hickey based the composition on that of Mughal miniatures. It should be stated from the outset that this would be highly unusual. With the possible exception of Zoffany, no European portraitists active in India in this period are believed to have been influenced stylistically by Mughal art.<sup>76</sup> Western patrons, and indeed Indian patrons of Western artists, expected art to conform to Western convention and aesthetics. However, Hickey would certainly have been aware of Mughal artistic tradition. For one thing his patron, Wellesley, collected Mughal miniatures. Moreover, copies of miniatures were made by Company artists, who also developed a style that combined stylistic idioms of both Mughal and Western art; both types of image were sold in the bazaars. In addition, as previously noted, Hickey had access to the court of the Nawab of Arcot, itself a centre for the practice of Mughal art.

Courtly Mughal art reached its apogee in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Single page illuminated and illustrated manuscripts were set in exquisitely decorated borders which were then preserved in albums and kept for private contemplation.<sup>77</sup> Mughal miniatures were painted in layer upon layer of opaque watercolour which was then burnished to give the work a hard jewel-like appearance.<sup>78</sup> It is a hybrid art form which though derived from the flat decorative style of Persian art also incorporated elements of regional Indian art (the imperial ateliers employed both Muslim and Hindu artists from other court centres), Chinese and European styles.<sup>79</sup> Figures came to have a degree of weight and volume and occupied a credible virtual space; these trends towards naturalism were enabled both by an artist's knowledge of the plasticity of Indian art but also by exposure to Western art. However, although Mughal artists were increasingly able to make space recede through the use of overlapping and receding planes and of aerial perspective,

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<sup>76</sup> See for example Jasanoff 2012: 137 for an analysis of Zoffany's *Colonel Mordunt's Cock Match* c.1784-8 and its possible stylistic borrowing from Mughal miniatures.

<sup>77</sup> Losty and Roy 2012: 27-31, 82-3, Ryan 2004: 77, Mitter 2001: 107-43.

<sup>78</sup> Ryan 2004: 77.

<sup>79</sup> Losty and Roy 2012: 9, 29, Ryan 2004: 77.

they were not interested in the illusionism of linear perspective and other effects of Western mimesis including those of light and shade. They held to the traditional Indian and Islamic aesthetics of an idealised image in which physical and moral perfection are symbolically conveyed through stylisation and convention.<sup>80</sup>

In pre-colonial India, Indian elites collected and stored information. People were routinely described in terms of race, rank, and pedigree with minute distinctions of skin colour and appearance being noted both in public reports and in Mughal miniatures.<sup>81</sup> Mughal paintings are hierarchical, in terms not only of position within the composition but also of style used. The elite occupy the upper register and are painted in full profile. Verisimilitude is not an issue; the shape of a beard for example can indicate identity, jewels and a nimbus derived from the Christian halo suggest kingship. As may be seen in the painting now known as *Jahangir Presents Prince Khurram with a Turban Ornament* (c. 1630 to 1640), figure studies of the lower social orders occupy the lowest register but also are more naturalistic (fig. 3.21).<sup>82</sup> Subjects include those of different ages, race and skin colour. All are placed at different angles and heights, the better to be seen, as Hickey has done in the Kirkpatrick portrait.

Notwithstanding the lack of precedent, Hickey does thus appear to have appropriated a stylistic characteristic of Mughal painting. He may have done so for two reasons. The first reason would have been for the sake of cultural capital which would elevate the status of the portrait. Mughal miniatures were prestigious objects prized by both Indian and Western collectors. The second reason could relate to Kirkpatrick's unusual dexterity in the art of writing Persian letters. Such letters were believed not only to preserve the charisma of the author but also to paint pictures in words and were thus closely linked to the art of Mughal miniature painting. By presenting figure studies associated with Kirkpatrick's biography in a form found in Mughal miniatures, Hickey could be said to be underlining Kirkpatrick's expertise as an orientalist scholar.

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<sup>80</sup> Crill and Jarwala 2010: 15, Losty and Roy 2012: 27-8.

<sup>81</sup> Bayly 1996: 25-9.

<sup>82</sup> Losty and Roy 2012: 75, 85.

In contrast to Kirkpatrick's portrait, that of Colonel Mackenzie and his Indian assistants has been the subject of much scholarly research, in particular on the part of Jennifer Howes (fig. 3.22). Mackenzie, who had many interests as both a surveyor and an antiquarian left an extensive archive. As he conducted the survey of Mysore, he showed a pioneering interest in the epigraphy of southern India; he collected inscribed stones and metal or had the inscriptions copied. He also had oral histories transcribed.<sup>83</sup> Although Mackenzie personally paid the salaries of many of his assistants when funding was curtailed, all of his collecting was carried out within the context of a state-sponsored project as both Trautmann and Wagoner have underlined.<sup>84</sup> The survey of Mysore was undertaken to facilitate the administration of the newly conquered territories. Wellesley had proposed that the 'attention of the Surveyor should not be confined to mere military or Geographical information, but should be extended to a statistical account of the whole country'.<sup>85</sup> A 'statistical account' in the early nineteenth century included any economic, social, and political information, whether relating to past or present that would be useful in administration; it did not have the modern sense of collecting numerical data. What sets the Mackenzie survey apart is both the extent of what he chose to collect and the involvement of his Indian assistants.<sup>86</sup>

The jobs of those employed by the survey tended to be racially determined. Thus, whereas Europeans were employed as engineers and surveyors, Indians travelled with Mackenzie as translators and copyists or were employed locally as *harkaras* (informants), while people of mixed race or military orphans served as draughtsmen and copyists.<sup>87</sup> The Indians were for the most part Niyogi (that is secular) Brahmins, many of whom were recruited from the chancery of the Nawab of Arcot's court.<sup>88</sup> They were skilled linguists not only in the vernacular southern languages but also in those used in various cosmopolitan administrations, including Marathi, Hindustani, Persian and latterly English. Their language skills and caste

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<sup>83</sup> Wagoner 2003: 786-91.

<sup>84</sup> Wagoner 2003: 789, Trautmann 2009: 6-8.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Wagoner 2003: 789.

<sup>86</sup> Edney 1997: 152-5, 175-9.

<sup>87</sup> Howes 2010: 7.

<sup>88</sup> Wagoner 2003: 795-7.

enabled them to move between the worlds of the Telegu *karanams* (village accountant-scribes), the bureaucracy of the Arcot court, European society and the scholars at Fort St George.<sup>89</sup> By contrast, the majority of those of mixed race came from the Madras Military Male Orphan Asylum which had been founded in 1789.<sup>90</sup> Children in the asylum were considered to be 'native' by virtue of being born in India whether to parents who were both British or of mixed race. In 1794, a surveying school, the Madras Observatory, which drew its first trainees from the Asylum was established. It was believed that to educate 'native children', particularly those of mixed race, would make them useful members of society; it also provided a pool of cheap draughtsmen.

Two draughtsmen from the Asylum contributed topographical information for the background of Mackenzie's portrait. Howes has argued convincingly that Mackenzie gave Hickey a watercolour drawing by John Newman (d.1818) to copy as the background.<sup>91</sup> In 1816, just prior to Mackenzie sitting to Hickey, Newman had made a fair watercolour copy of a sketch made in May 1806 by Benjamin Swain Ward (1786-1835) of a site that includes the Jain statue of Gomatesvara at Karkala near Mangalore in modern day Karnataka.<sup>92</sup> Mackenzie was the first European to write about Jainism publishing 'An Account of the Jains' in *Asiatick Researches*, the journal of the Asiatick Society in 1804; the presence in the background of a Jain statue may therefore be interpreted as an allusion to Mackenzie's interest in Jainism.<sup>93</sup> The background, however, evokes his professional as well as his personal interests since a surveyor's pole can be seen beside the statue. Unlike earlier surveys based on simple military route maps, Mackenzie conducted a trigonometrical survey which utilised the principles of triangulation; the presence of the pole beside the statue thus highlights his innovative practice.

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<sup>89</sup> Mantena 2009: 147.

<sup>90</sup> Howes 2010: 10-12.

<sup>91</sup> Howes 2010: 214-5. Newman was of mixed race.

<sup>92</sup> Howes 2010: 15,41. Ward was the son of the soldier-artist Francis Swain Ward. As a resident in the Asylum, he was sent to the Observatory as an apprentice surveyor before being appointed to the Mysore Survey under Mackenzie, Howes 2010: 155.

<sup>93</sup> The statue has been wrongly identified in the literature as the Jain statue at Sravanna Belgola. See for example Archer 1979: 233, Edney 1997: 153. However, Howes has studied topographical views of both sites, and concludes that it is the statue at Gomatesvara, Howes 2010: 215.

Mackenzie is portrayed in the uniform of the Madras Engineers and is flanked by three Indians, two of whom are carrying palm-leaf manuscripts. The rolled-up manuscript held by the assistant to Mackenzie's left has previously been erroneously identified as a telescope.<sup>94</sup> An inscription on the back of the frame identifies the Indians but errors in the text, including misidentification of the statue as the Buddha, mean that the identifications are unreliable. Mackenzie's first translator was a Telugu, Kevali Venkata Boriah Brahmin (1796-1803). He subsequently employed four more of the Kevali brothers.<sup>95</sup> The Kevalis were Niyogi Brahmins and when the portrait was made Boriah's younger brother Kavali Venkata Laksmiah was Mackenzie's head translator.<sup>96</sup> Both Boriah and Laksmiah are extensively acknowledged in Mackenzie's journals so it is reasonable to assume that one of the Indians portrayed is Laksmiah.<sup>97</sup>

The fact that Mackenzie has chosen to pose with, and give prominence to his Indian assistants is in itself noteworthy but of perhaps greater interest is the inclusion of palm-leaf manuscripts. A metal stylus was used to inscribe the leaf in a sort of 'shorthand'; the manuscript was then used as a visual prompt in what was a memory-based culture.<sup>98</sup> Niyogi Brahmins were not only multi-lingual but also had the ability to communicate in different registers within the same language. Thus, for example, they could work as Telegu accountant-scribes dependent on palm-leaf manuscripts but were equally conversant with grammatically based, '*munshi*' Telegu and Tamil as it was developed in Fort St George to serve the needs of the colonial administration.<sup>99</sup> The significance of the inclusion of palm-leaf manuscripts is twofold. Firstly, the juxtaposition of palm-leaf manuscript and surveyor's pole underlines the co-existence of two incommensurable systems of knowledge formation: one reliant on memory and recovery of information and the other dependent on observation, measurement and classification. Both were essential to the completion of the Survey.

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<sup>94</sup> See for example Archer 1979: 232, Edney 1997: 153-4. By contrast, Howes argues convincingly that it is not a telescope but a rolled-up manuscript. Howes 2010: 237-8.

<sup>95</sup> Mantena 2009: 127-47.

<sup>96</sup> Howes 2010: 237-8.

<sup>97</sup> Mantena 2009: 132-4.

<sup>98</sup> Trautmann 2009: 18.

<sup>99</sup> Wagoner 2003: 797.

Secondly, whereas in the case of the paper and ink documents produced within both the Mughal courts and the British administration, authority lay with the written text, with the use of palm-leaf documents authority rested with the scribe and translator.<sup>100</sup> Thus, the portrait not only acknowledges the role of Mackenzie's assistants in the Mysore Survey but also their standing within their own community.

Unlike Kirkpatrick, Mackenzie knew no Indian languages. He was therefore dependent on the active participation of his Indian assistants, who however, were not mere passive providers of raw data. With the increasing 'Anglicisation' of British India in the 1830s and reliance on paper-based records much indigenous knowledge was certainly superseded and displaced. However, close analysis of Hickey's portrait of Mackenzie, with due consideration given to the particularities of time and place in its making, underlines the co-existence of two ways of thinking and knowledge formation, within what was undoubtedly an increasingly contested colonial space. What this group portrait makes visible, is, in the words of Wagoner, 'the intellectual conversation' between two different knowledge systems which ultimately produced a Survey and an archive that went beyond the boundaries of each.<sup>101</sup> The originality of the interpretation of Hickey's painting, outlined above, rests in the application of Wagoner's account of different knowledge systems to the portrait.

Close study of the portraits of Mowbray and the *banian* in chapter two and of Mackenzie and his Indian assistants has underlined the co-existence of competing forms of knowledge both in the contested Westernised spaces of the commercial world of British Calcutta and of the conquered territories of Mysore. It has also drawn attention to the significance of an Indian elite as transitional figures as British interest in India shifted from a primarily commercial concern to an increasingly imperial orientation.

Whilst the Survey of Mysore was a direct consequence of colonial aggression, other surveys were seemingly 'benign'.<sup>102</sup> In a letter dated 6 July 1803 and published on 7 July 1804, for example, Fort St George requested information concerning both

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<sup>100</sup> Trautmann 2009: 18.

<sup>101</sup> Wagoner 2003: 809.

<sup>102</sup> Arnold 1993: 25.

the history of India and parts of China engaged in trade with the East India Company on behalf of the Company's historiographers. This information was to include not only matters of 'chronology, geography, laws, political revolution but also the progress of the arts, manufacturers, science - and of the fine arts - and particularly on the forms and present state of the internal and foreign trade'.<sup>103</sup> In a bold move that both underlines his self-belief and typifies his relentless search for financial security, Hickey proposed that he be appointed as Historical and Portrait Painter to the project. In a thirteen-page 'memorial' he details why a practitioner of the fine arts would be a suitable candidate, proposing a set of subjects for painting and subsequent engraving.<sup>104</sup> He also outlines his proposed conditions of employment and remuneration.<sup>105</sup> In rejecting his application on financial grounds on 23 October 1805 (perhaps because Hickey proposed keeping any profits from subsequent engravings for himself), the Company stated that such a project would be better left to 'the exertions of voluntary enterprise and...the encouragement of private patronage'; it was also considered to be not directly relevant to the proposed survey.<sup>106</sup> A further survey commissioned by the Company in 1807 of eastern India studied matters of trade and in addition, systems of land tenure and the physical condition of the people, the diseases to which they were subject and any methods of treatment all of which was useful knowledge for practitioners of Western medicine in India.<sup>107</sup> With the introduction of Western medicine to India the human body itself became a site of contestation between European science and indigenous forms of treatment. An example of this was the attempt by the Madras Presidency to introduce a programme firstly of variolation in 1800 and then vaccination against smallpox from 1802 with an intensified campaign from 1805.<sup>108</sup> This provides one of

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<sup>103</sup> This request was first made in a public letter sent by the Board of Directors to the Madras Presidency 6<sup>th</sup> May 1797 and repeated in a general letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> July 1803. Hickey quotes from the 1803 letter. Hickey 1804: 2.

<sup>104</sup> Hickey 1804: 3-13.

<sup>105</sup> Hickey 1804: 13-14. Hickey's memorial is paginated but he omits page 5.

<sup>106</sup> East India Company 1805.

<sup>107</sup> Arnold 1993: 25-6.

<sup>108</sup> Variolation was a process whereby attenuated matter taken from a smallpox pustule was inoculated into a recipient, who it was hoped, would suffer a mild form of the disease thus conferring subsequent immunity. It had originated in the East and the method was brought from Constantinople to Europe in 1721 by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. In 1797 Edward Jenner discovered that inoculation with fresh matter taken from cowpox pustules was a more efficient and safer prophylaxis. Brimnes

the contexts within which a painting by Hickey of three young Indian women made around 1806, will be discussed (fig. 3.23).

Known variously today as the 'Three Princesses of Mysore' or 'Temple Dancers', the painting was offered for sale in the 1930s as 'Portrait Group of three Indian Princesses' with an attribution to Zoffany.<sup>109</sup> Since then the painting has been attributed to Hickey by George Breeze; moreover, Archer revised the identity of the sitters as *devadasis* or temple dancers.<sup>110</sup> If it was commissioned as a portrait, the patron is unknown. Archer suggests that Hickey may have painted the picture as a sample of his work whilst awaiting a reply from the Company concerning his request to be appointed as Historical and Portrait painter.<sup>111</sup> Certainly the series of paintings that Hickey proposed was intended to include Indian figure studies varying in terms of caste and regional dress.<sup>112</sup>

More recently, Nigel Chancellor has controversially proposed that the three young women can be identified not only as princesses, but also, more specifically, as the twelve-year old Raja of Mysore's senior wife on the left, his younger wife on the right and his sister in the centre. Chancellor further suggests that the picture was painted as part of the British campaign to promote Jennerian vaccination amongst the indigenous population.<sup>113</sup> He backs up this claim by showing that senior members of the Raja's court including his *dewan* Purnaiya and the Rani Lakshmi Ammani whose husband, the former Wadiyar ruler, had died from smallpox, supported the programme. Furthermore, it was publicly announced by Purnaiya on 19 July 1806 that the younger bride had been inoculated.<sup>114</sup> Uptake of vaccination amongst

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2004: 1-2. Cowpox was rare in India and the first vaccine reached India in June 1802 through a relay of children vaccinated arm to arm from Baghdad to Bombay. Arnold 1993: 134, 139-140.

<sup>109</sup> Chancellor 2001: 781.

<sup>110</sup> In southern India, *devadasis* entered the temple as pre-pubescent girls. Their lives were subsequently devoted to the worship and service of a temple deity through dance and prayer. They accrued ritual privileges including the income from land grants. In the early nineteenth century they had a high social status; many were wealthy. *Devadasis* were believed to be married to the deity, therefore they could not marry mortal men. However, they did have children with their wealthy patrons and were also allowed to adopt female children. Sreenivas 2011: 63-8.

<sup>111</sup> Archer 1979: 230.

<sup>112</sup> Hickey 1804: 4,6.

<sup>113</sup> Chancellor 2001: 773-5.

<sup>114</sup> Chancellor 2001: 775. Other high ranking Indians to be vaccinated included the wife of the Peshwa of Pune. Arnold 1993: 148. Prominent Europeans in Mysore who supported the programme included the French missionary, Abbé Dubois, whose portrait Hickey painted in 1823.



Indians was patchy for various reasons: the arm to arm method of inoculation was potentially polluting for upper caste Hindus as it could involve physical contact with those of lower caste; vaccinators were usually male, a problem for post-pubertal females; and the original source of the material was bovine. It was also a foreign process and perhaps most importantly, it was secular.<sup>115</sup> Smallpox was understood in India as a divine presence rather than a disease, with the goddess of smallpox, Sitala in the North and Mariamma in the South, needing to be propitiated.<sup>116</sup> Variolation, the Eastern method of smallpox prophylaxis, as traditionally practised in India was considered more a religious ceremony involving the goddess than a medical procedure as such and thus existed in tension with vaccination.<sup>117</sup> If the painting did commemorate the junior queen's vaccination it would reinforce claims of the superiority of Western over Eastern medical practice. However, there are problems with Chancellor's analysis, not least whether high ranking Indian women would have sat to a male European artist. In the unlikely event that they did so, the painting would not have gone on public display, thus limiting its potential as propaganda for the campaign.

It is useful at this point to compare the Madras painting with that of the *bibi* discussed in chapter two (fig. 2.17). Both pictures are of a similar size but the pose and format are very different. The *bibi* is self-absorbed and detached, her gaze does not engage with that of the viewer, so that she is very much the object of the male spectator's gaze. In contrast, the three Madras women gaze out of the picture and engage directly with the spectator. The vertical format combined with their demeanour gives their figures a statuesque, robust quality compared to the more gently pliant *bibi*. Indeed, this feature of the painting has been made to serve as the basis for a different interpretation. Hermione de Almeida and George Gilpin, whilst agreeing with Archer that the image formed part of Hickey's 'prospectus' claim, that not only are the figures prostitutes but that two of them are cross-dressing men.<sup>118</sup> There is no concrete evidence to support this claim.

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<sup>115</sup> Arnold 1993: 141-3.

<sup>116</sup> Arnold 1993: 121-5.

<sup>117</sup> Arnold 1993: 127.

<sup>118</sup> Almeida and Gilpin 2005: 232-3.

The immediacy of the group portrait owes much to Hickey's use of local colour. As previously noted, his use of colour in the *bibi* portrait was distinctively rococo in that he employed a muted palette of harmonious pinks, and greyish-greens. Hickey's colour harmonies unify the composition as similar tones were used to depict both the Indian sky and trees of the background. Only the barrier of the stone column and verandah prevent the *bibi* dissolving into the background as a 'women-in-nature' figure. The overall effect is one of exoticism, passivity and sensuality. Differently, in the Madras painting, Hickey contrasts deep blue-purple with white in the costume of the left-hand figure, white and pink in the sari and under-bodice of the right-hand girl and green, yellow and orange in the patterned fabric of the sari of the central figure. The image is further animated by coloured accents provided by the red trim on the central figure's sari, her red lips and *tilaka*, the red beads and the gold jewellery and golden ribbon edging the deep blue sari.

Chancellor argues that the composition is unconventional, proposing that Hickey has drawn on the iconography of Hindu art in his depiction of the three girls for the purpose of attracting the interest of elite Indian spectators: the target of the vaccination programme. He suggests that the central figure is shown in the *tribhanga* or thrice-bent position widely used in Indian temple sculpture, whilst the relative positions of the subjects' arms and disposition of their heads allow a mystical *yantra* or hexagram to be traced.<sup>119</sup> This may be to overstate the case. There is little to suggest, on close inspection, that the central figure's pose is particularly odd. What is unusual is the proximity and physical contact of the three figures. The depiction of three female figures may suggest the classical subject of the three graces or charities; though they were never shown in such an intimate grouping in ancient art. However, more modern interpretations of the subject, for example Canova's painting *The Three Charities Dancing* (1799) does show the women in closer physical contact (fig. 3.24). Given that Hickey's group portrait may be of temple dancers, it is significant that both antique sculpture of the graces and Canova's painting involved the suggestion of dance.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, considering the possibility of a classical prototype, it is very

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<sup>119</sup> Chancellor 2001: 779-80.

<sup>120</sup> Pollock 2003: 186-91.

hard to ignore a description Hickey wrote in his life of the ancient artist Polygnotus.<sup>121</sup> According to ancient sources, he was the first painter to show female subjects in strong draperies, with ornaments in their hair but also with their mouths slightly open to show their teeth, thus animating the face and avoiding the stiffness of the ‘ancients’ – just as Hickey has done in his portrayal of the central woman and the younger ‘queen’ (fig. 3.25).

Unlike the *bibi* picture where Hickey’s emphasis was on costume, in this instance he has prioritised the depiction of the women’s jewellery. Chancellor challenges Archer’s assumption that because they are wearing a lot of jewellery and have no obvious source for it, that is to say, they are not depicted with wealthy men, the women depicted here must be temple dancers or courtesans.<sup>122</sup> They are wearing the headdresses, earrings, chains connecting the earrings and hair, collars, long necklaces, and the heavy armlets and bangles typical of southern India. Hickey has not only depicted the jewellery in meticulous detail but has also emphasised its weight by building up the paint in a thick impasto, so much so that the jewelled nose rings stand proud of the canvas. Chancellor argues that the headdresses of the two outer figures show the triangular *patta* on their foreheads which would suggest that they are wives or betrothed wives of the Raja. A further indication are the crescent moons on the headdress of the junior ‘queen’ and the roundels of the headdress worn by the senior ‘queen’ which may represent the juxtaposition of the sun and the moon, a conjunction of symbolic significance to warrior caste rulers such as the Wadiyars.<sup>123</sup>

Chancellor supports his argument by comparing the headdresses depicted in the Hickey painting with the hair ornaments worn by a dancer in a painting by Tilly Kettle of 1772, underlining the differences (fig. 3.26).<sup>124</sup> They are indeed different, but the Kettle painting in question was made in Faizabad, in Oudh in the north of the country. A painting by Kettle of temple dancers made in Madras around 1770 shows women wearing very similar headdresses to that of the woman on the left of Hickey’s

<sup>121</sup>Life of Polygnotus of Thasos 448 BC, Chapter Five, Hickey 1788.

<sup>122</sup> Chancellor 2001: 770-1. Archer 1979: 230.

<sup>123</sup> Chancellor 2001: 772-4.

<sup>124</sup> Chancellor 2001: 772.

portrait; they also wear identical bangles, collars and gold ornaments at the edge of the bodice sleeves (fig. 3.27). Partha Mitter draws attention to the rich tradition of jewellery making in southern India, further noting that the best examples were owned by both temple dancers and wealthy women.<sup>125</sup> In addition, during the dedication rite on entering the temple as a *devadasi*, the young woman was married to a deity in a ceremony akin to an upper caste Hindu wedding.<sup>126</sup> She subsequently wore bridal jewellery which included sun and moon-shaped headpieces. The jewellery, does not therefore confirm Chancellor's proposal that the women are Indian royalty.

To support his case for reading the picture as pro-vaccination propaganda, Chancellor draws attention to the pock-marked skin of the older 'queen'. Certainly, Hickey has carefully detailed the variation in skin colour of her face (fig. 3.28). She has vitiligo, that is to say a loss of skin pigment under her nose and around her mouth. This is quite common in damaged skin such as that scarred by smallpox and is more obvious in darker skin. Chancellor is correct to highlight her damaged skin; artists usually corrected the complexions of those scarred by smallpox. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for example, who suffered facial scarring after contracting smallpox in 1715, was subsequently portrayed with a flawless complexion. (fig. 3.29). He also notes that the younger 'queen' is positioned slightly in front of the other two women and rather oddly is holding up her sari drawing attention to her upper arm (fig. 3.30). The outside of the upper arm was where females were vaccinated. Moreover, Chancellor suggests a patch in the silk of her bodice sleeve is visible where the material would have been cut to facilitate the procedure and preserve her modesty.<sup>127</sup> For Chancellor the propaganda rests in the juxtaposition of the smallpox-damaged skin of the older woman and the fresh complexion of the younger, thereby emphasising the benefits of Western-style prevention of the disease.<sup>128</sup> Thus, the tension between what was perceived by Europeans as irrational, even superstitious

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<sup>125</sup> Mitter 2001: 164.

<sup>126</sup> Sreenivas 2011: 63.

<sup>127</sup> Chancellor 2001: 776-7.

<sup>128</sup> Chancellor 2001: 776.

indigenous medical practice and Western empirically based science is played out on the colonial body itself.

The question still remains, would high caste Indian women have sat to Hickey or have agreed to such public display of the picture as would be necessary if it were to advertise the benefits of vaccination.<sup>129</sup> Hickey did have access to the Mysore court. He not only painted a portrait of the Raja but also of Purnaiya and a portrait in chalk of the British Resident, Josiah Webbe. A couple of examples of high-ranking Indian women sitting to Western artists in this period do exist including Zoffany's portrait of Fyse Baksh, adopted daughter of Shah Alam, and that of Khair-un-Nissa Begum, great niece of the *dewan* of Hyderabad, by an unknown artist<sup>130</sup> However, both women were married to Europeans. Furthermore, if Hickey's portrait does depict the two 'queens', it is a representation of wives in a polygamous society. Although the supposed target of the propaganda was the indigenous population such a commission may not have been acceptable to Europeans on moral and religious grounds.

It is possible that Chancellor and Archer are both correct in their suppositions, to a certain degree; that Hickey's closely observed group portrait relates to the Governor's accelerated campaign against smallpox but that the women portrayed are in fact temple dancers. Details such as the older woman's damaged skin and the unusual pose of the younger women appear to have been deliberately included. If the subject is indeed smallpox prevention, as seems probable, the painting is an unusual example of art in the service of early nineteenth-century British medical practice in India. The vaccination programme served empire; it was not an altruistic exercise on the part of the British. On the one hand, by offering vaccination to both Europeans and Indians, the East India Company could promote itself as benevolent; on the other hand, the practical purpose of vaccination was to maintain the healthy workforce, both Indian and European, vital to imperial expansion.

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<sup>129</sup> It has not been possible to ascertain if the portrait was ever publicly displayed or the identity of its original owner. It was not part of the collection in Government House Madras or the Banqueting Hall. Love 1903.

<sup>130</sup> Khair-un-Nissa was married to James Achilles Kirkpatrick (a cause of much scandal at the time), half-brother of William Kirkpatrick, who replaced William as the British Resident in Hyderabad in 1797.

Hickey's time in Madras was interrupted when in 1807 he left the town for Calcutta, returning to Madras in 1812. His temporary removal may have been prompted by the arrival in Madras of George Chinnery in 1802. Only one portrait, of the Anglican priest and missionary Henry Martyn (1781-1812), is known to have survived from Hickey's sojourn in Calcutta. Martyn arrived in India in 1806 but by late 1810 was planning to leave India for Persia due to ill health. Having promised his mentor Charles Simeon to sit for his portrait, Martyn wrote in a letter of 6 October 1810 of his plans to do so, adding that it would be amusing to have one made of his chief *munshi* Sabat.<sup>131</sup> There is no evidence of the latter being painted, but on 18 November, 1810 Martyn recorded in his journal that he had sat for his portrait (fig. 3.31).<sup>132</sup> Hickey has portrayed Martyn, modestly attired as befits his profession, in front of a large pillar. India is suggested by the distant view glimpsed beyond the balustrade of the colonnaded verandah. Indian figures, one carrying a water jar on her head, are shown beside simple dwellings set amidst palm trees. As an evangelical who believed that India lay in 'spiritual darkness', Martyn had translated the New Testament into both Persian and Hindustani with the aim of bringing the light of Christianity to a primitive people.<sup>133</sup> The Indian figures could be read as people who would benefit from his mission. Martyn's reputation grew after his early death in 1812. His portrait was engraved in 1822 by William Say in London who produced a mezzotint which was subsequently reproduced as the frontispiece to editions of Martyn's journals and letters.

Having received a commission to restore the paintings in the Exchange which had been damaged by the sea air, Hickey returned to Madras in 1812.<sup>134</sup> One of these pictures, a portrait of Sir Eyre Coote (1726-83), had to be re-painted entirely. The original portrait by Home, Coote's nephew, was a posthumous one painted relatively recently in 1795.<sup>135</sup> The problems caused by the Indian climate for oil paintings were

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<sup>131</sup> Martyn Vol 2 1837: 307.

<sup>132</sup> Martyn Vol 2 1837: 307.

<sup>133</sup> Smith 1903: 199.

<sup>134</sup> Hickey had previously been employed by Fort St George to repair ambassadorial portraits of King George III and Queen Charlotte, sent to Madras between 1762 and 1767, in 1801 and 1805 using similar portraits owned by the Nawab of Arcot as a guide. East India Company 1806, Love 1903: 75-6.

<sup>135</sup> This portrait, in its turn, was probably copied from a painting by Nathaniel Dance owned by Claude Martin in Lucknow. Cotton 1924: not paginated.

highlighted when Hickey wrote that it had 'been reduced to such a desperate condition as to leave but traits so faint, so shattered and imperfect for my guidance, as to render inevitable the painting entirely anew upon the canvas'.<sup>136</sup> Hickey recalled that 'a gentleman in Calcutta, Mr George Cruttenden, was in possession of a portrait of Sir Eyre Coote said to have been painted by Zoffani'. It was borrowed and a study of the head made from it.<sup>137</sup> Progress was slow and the new portrait was only completed in 1822. Meanwhile, in 1816, Hickey painted and subsequently engraved the portrait of Mackenzie as previously discussed. His last known portrait, paid for by subscription on behalf of the Madras Literary Society, of the French missionary and Indologist Abbé Dubois was made in 1823 prior to the sitter's return to Europe (fig. 3.32). The Abbé, who is shown dressed in Indian clothes as was his custom, appears against a background of *droogs*, the characteristic fortified hills of Mysore where he had ministered.<sup>138</sup>

On 20 May 1824 Hickey died aged eighty-three. The *Madras Gazette* reported that 'the portraits he had finished only a few days prior to his dissolution bore every appearance of his wonted vigour, genius and skill'.<sup>139</sup> During his final years Hickey was supported financially by the city of Madras, initially from lottery funds which paid for the restoration of the portraits in the Banqueting Hall and latterly by a small pension.<sup>140</sup> His long career in India, thirty-three years in total, was only exceeded by that of Home who was active in India from 1791 to 1834. Throughout this section Hickey's portraits have been considered within the overarching context of imperial surveys and competing forms of knowledge, with reference both to the control of land and to the colonised body itself. This is not to suggest that Hickey deliberately encoded references to forms of knowledge within his paintings but rather that inadvertent inclusions consequent on his close observation of detail, allow them to be interpreted in this way. Thus, his paintings are active purveyors of meaning. When

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<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Cotton 1924: not paginated.

<sup>137</sup> Cotton 1924: not paginated.

<sup>138</sup> An English translation of Dubois' French manuscript concerning Hindu manners and customs was published in 1816. A revised edition, first published in 1897, used an engraving after Hickey's portrait as its frontispiece.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Archer 1979: 233.

<sup>140</sup> Cotton 1924: not paginated.

writing about Hickey's group portrait of Kirkpatrick and his Indian assistants, Grigsby argues that the picture 'implies an implacable divide between whiteness and the dark races squeezed into the small rectangle of space intended to contain them'.<sup>141</sup> While British interests in India at this time were increasingly imperial in orientation, close study of the portraits discussed in this section do not suggest an 'implacable divide' between the British and Indians but rather an active, if unequal, interdependence.

### Conclusion

In terms of subject, patronage and use, the portraits that Hickey made in Madras differed greatly from those he painted in the changing commercial world of Calcutta. As noted above, his Irishness did not have the operational value that it had in Calcutta. Nevertheless, attention has been drawn to the skills he developed during his early training in Dublin that facilitated his close observation and depiction of his Indian subjects. Analysis of individual portraits such as the dynastic portrait of the Nawab of Arcot and his son or that of Purnaiya, highlights Hickey's access to elite Indians and their use of European-style portraits in self-promotion. The body of work he produced in the aftermath of the British victory at Seringapatam, considered in conjunction with portraits of Wellesley and their display, clearly indicates both the emergence of a distinct imperial register within the classical conventions of British art practice and the formative role of portraiture in imperial propaganda. Nevertheless, this period was still one of transition. Close study of Hickey's group portraits that include Indian figures, reveals something of the complexities of Anglo-Indian relations at this specific historical moment. Questions of why so many Indians were included in the portraits and why the artist has painted the figures in such a way not only suggest engagement by the British with Indians proficient in different knowledge systems but also the active participation of elite Indians in both the instruction and the acquisition of useful colonial knowledge. Though mutually dependent, these exchanges between British and Indian elites were negotiated within an increasingly contested colonial space. A sense of the change to come is

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<sup>141</sup> Grigsby 2016: 63.



suggested by Hickey's late portrait of the missionary Henry Martyn, in which India is firmly relegated to the background.

On 15 August 1787, Sir William Jones sent a letter from India to Earl Spencer in England, in which he wrote 'in Europe you see India through a glass darkly: here we are in a strong light; and a thousand little nuances are perceptible to us, which are not visible through your best telescopes, and which could not be explained without writing volumes'.<sup>142</sup> Thus Jones underlined not only the impossibility of understanding the subcontinent when viewed from afar, but also the challenges faced by Europeans resident in India when attempting to represent its subtleties to a Western audience. In many respects he echoed the sentiments of Edmund Burke, who, in 1783, whilst delivering a speech to the British Parliament in support of Charles James Fox's India Bill had recourse to the language of the Sublime to express the obscurity and vastness of India: a 'very remote object', viewed through a 'false and cloudy medium'.<sup>143</sup> An artist of Thomas Hickey's relatively modest talent could never have succeeded in representing India as such. No-one could; that was the point that both Jones and Burke were making. However, Hickey did succeed in doing something that no-one else had, and that few have subsequently recognised. At a pivotal moment in Anglo-Indian relations as they moved from a period of fluidity, accommodation and change, albeit punctuated by episodes of violence, to the surveillance, control and Anglicisation of the nineteenth century, Hickey's Indian portraits provide a context within which a multiplicity of voices may be heard.

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<sup>142</sup> Jones Vol II 19: 749.

<sup>143</sup> Edmund Burke, speech in favour of Fox's India Bill, 1783, quoted in O'Brien 1992: 323.

## Chapter Four

### Imperial Landscapes: Ireland to Ceylon 1830-1850

Colonial and imperial expansion not only involves the physical acquisition of territory, but also the cultural and visual appropriation of land: landscape is thus a key issue for the nexus of art and imperialism.<sup>1</sup> The range of strategies for viewing colonial land and hence controlling its representation includes the work of draughtsmen participating in mapping and surveys, amateur sketches, prints and illustrations, and the fine art landscape view: all play a crucial role in the collation and construction of colonial knowledge. Although the previous two chapters focused on the work of Thomas Hickey, a portrait painter, the question of land was never far away. From the cartouche of Rennell's map of Hindoostan, through the syncretic British/Mughal map hanging behind Mowbray, to Mackenzie's survey of Mysore, consideration of Indian land as a contested cultural space formed a significant element of the analysis.

This chapter introduces the subject of Western art practice and colonial landscape views. The site of the discussion moves from India to Ceylon, highlighting the work of Andrew Nicholl, a self-taught, professional artist from Belfast, who was employed by the colonial government in Ceylon as an art teacher from 1846-49/50. Ceylon is rarely included in studies of art and empire; furthermore, by considering the work of an Irish landscape artist active in Ceylon comparisons and contrasts may be drawn that would not otherwise be possible. Ireland itself was a colonised land; similar processes were applied by the British to Irish land: they carried out surveys, redrew boundaries and anglicised place names.<sup>2</sup> Nicholl travelled to Ceylon at the zenith of the British Empire, a time when imperial ambition was supported both militarily and by a coherent colonial bureaucracy; nevertheless, as will be shown,

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<sup>1</sup> Said makes a useful distinction between 'imperialism' and 'colonialism': imperialism is the practice, attitudes and theory of a dominant metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; colonialism, almost always the consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements in distant territories. Said 1994: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Nash 1999: 457-8.

discussion of his work in both Ireland and Ceylon suggests how landscape art not only served empire but also had an oppositional potential. Consideration of Nicholl's experience in Ceylon, employed as he was by a colonial state institution at the height of British imperial expansion, also serves to underscore the significance of the portraits painted by Hickey in India during the earlier period of the nascent Empire; a time of transition as Britain's commercial interests in the subcontinent became increasingly colonial in orientation with a consequent change in Anglo-Indian relations.

Nicholl spent a short time in Ceylon by contrast to Hickey's long career in India. His artistic practice also differed in key respects from that of Hickey, in addition to the fact that he worked in the domain of landscape. Whereas Hickey documented and contributed to the cultural production of British India in a manner commensurate with eighteenth-century fine art practice, Nicholl's work may be more usefully considered within the wider parameters of nineteenth-century visual culture. To varying degrees, it may be described as functional, commercial and formulaic, given his repetition of motifs and views.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Nicholl exploited technological advances in printing and publishing. His work appeared as aquatints and lithographs, but mechanically reproduced prints after his drawings also featured with increasing regularity within published text as book illustrations and in the illustrated press. Illuminating comparisons can thus be made between Hickey, and Nicholl, both within the terms of art itself, contrasts between both genre and medium and between the very different protocols of image-making in traditional fine art and in the newer mass media of print.

As previously noted, when considering art and empire it is important not only to highlight the specific geo-historical context but also to consider prevailing Western conventions of art practice, thereby making it possible to explore differential relationships of power and knowledge embedded within an image. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, recent scholarship concerning landscape and the British Empire has tended to focus on one such artistic convention, the picturesque.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of visual culture and practice see Herbert 2003: 452-64.

<sup>4</sup> See introduction pp. 23-5.

picturesque is undoubtedly a useful starting point, not least because it underlines the ideological nature of Western conventions of landscape art and the way that their use varies depending on time and place. However, Nicholl's landscapes may not be readily discussed within its terms. The picturesque remains broadly relevant to his work as it was an aesthetic with wide social and cultural currency not only in Britain but also in Ireland and throughout the wider empire. In addition, although primarily an eighteenth-century aesthetic, its authority extended well into the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it will be argued in this chapter that the importance of the picturesque can be over-stated. To focus on the picturesque raises certain problems, not least because aesthetic categories often overlap; the art historian John Crowley, for example, has concatenated two categories to discuss imperial landscapes in terms of the topographic picturesque.<sup>6</sup> Most significantly, it will be shown that to focus on the picturesque is to limit the discussion. Ceylon was a militarised landscape; as well as being garrisoned throughout the island, British troops were also engaged in surveying and engineering projects such as the building of military roads. The conventions of military drawing, which are beyond the scope of this thesis, and of topographical and antiquarian studies used in surveys of the land, are therefore at least as important as those of the picturesque. In the analysis of Nicholl's work that follows, the picturesque serves mainly as a point of comparison.

Most relevant to an analysis of the work of Nicholl is the proposal by W. J. T. Mitchell that landscape should be considered as cultural practice.<sup>7</sup> Mitchell argues that it is not enough to consider what landscape 'is' and 'means', but that what it 'does' as a cultural practice must be assessed.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, landscape should not be thought of in terms of 'fixed genres', 'fixed media' or 'fixed places' but rather as a dynamic, constructive medium that circulates and intersects with other cultural and economic practices.<sup>9</sup> Mitchell's understanding of landscape as a fluid cultural practice is useful when analysing Nicholl's work because it is not easily classified by genre. Nicholl employed various, often intersecting, media and, in terms of place,

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<sup>5</sup> See Guha-Thakurta 2004: 13.

<sup>6</sup> Crowley 2011: 3-12.

<sup>7</sup> See introduction p. 24, for a discussion of Mitchell's influential essay, 'Imperial Landscape', 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell 2002: 1.

<sup>9</sup> Mitchell 2002: 2 and 1-4.

comparisons may be made between his landscape practice in Ireland and in Ceylon. In addition, Nicholl was producing landscape views in Ceylon whilst employed by a colonial art school; the curriculum of which provided for an education in technical drawing, mapping and design. Thus, his landscape practice intersected with imperial military and cultural practices, raising questions as to what his landscapes 'did' and to what extent they were constitutive of the processes of empire.

Although recent scholarship has stressed the importance of considering British landscape practice within the context of the wider empire, as previously noted, little work has been done on empire and landscape with particular reference to Ceylon.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Irish landscape practice has tended to be considered in terms of Ireland's relationship with England rather than in terms of the wider British Empire. Therefore, whilst the principal focus of this chapter will be on the representation of Ceylonese land, intra-imperial comparisons will be made with Ireland, where relevant. The first section considers Nicholl's early practice as it developed in Ireland whilst also highlighting the ideological role of landscape in terms of both the coloniser and the colonised. The discussion concerning Nicholl's Irish career leads on to the second section which offers an analysis of his role in colonial art education in Ceylon, where he not only taught technical drawing, mapping, and landscape but also design at the Colombo Academy. The third section will focus on Nicholl's journey out to Ceylon, with the fourth section considering his subsequent travels in the interior of the island. He published illustrated accounts of his travels; therefore, the work he produced will be considered both in relation to travel writing and his ongoing interest in botanical and antiquarian studies. In conclusion, Nicholl's use of print media and its implications for the perception of Ceylon in Ireland and Britain will be assessed.

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<sup>10</sup> See for example, Mitchell 2002, Barringer, Quilley, Fordham (eds) 2007, Crowley 2011.

## Section One: Andrew Nicholl and Ireland

This section describes Nicholl's early career, situating it in relation to both the development and teaching of landscape art in Ireland. As discussed above, the intersection of art, landscape and empire tends to be analysed in terms of the picturesque; therefore, the subject of the Irish picturesque will be introduced, highlighting how the conventions of the picturesque could be variously interpreted in a colonial situation. Finally, consideration of Nicholl's involvement in antiquarian studies throughout Ireland draws attention to the political and cultural implications of landscape as an oppositional medium.

In Ireland as in England, artists could not make a living solely by painting landscape views before the 1750s. Although, the Dublin Society School had awarded premiums for landscape since 1740 when the first was awarded to Susanna Drury (c.1698-c.1770) for a view of the Giant's Causeway, a significant development had been the establishment of a School of Landscape and Ornament within the Society Schools in 1756.<sup>11</sup> However, consistent with the overall ethos of the Society Schools, the school was primarily a school of ornament, adopting a practical, commercially-driven, decorative approach to landscape.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, graduates, including George Barret (c.1732-84), a founding member of the Royal Academy, did pursue successful careers as landscape artists in oils. Many factors contributed to the rise in popularity of landscape painting throughout the latter half of the century but much of the impetus to growth came from the bottom up with the rise of the print industry and the sale of engravings of topographical landscapes and antiquarian sites.

Given the form Nicholl's practice would take in both Ireland and Ceylon, such developments are more relevant to the discussion of his career than developments within the fine arts alone. A self-taught painter and illustrator, Nicholl built up a local

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<sup>11</sup> The Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacture and Commerce in England invited landscape artists to compete for premiums from the 1760s. Solkin 2015: 210

<sup>12</sup> Turpin 1986: 45

reputation as a watercolourist and painter of landscape views whilst working as a compositor with the Belfast newspaper, the *Northern Whig*.<sup>13</sup> He subsequently developed his artistic practice through his association with members of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society; for example, he illustrated texts for the botanist Dr James Lawson Drummond. He also made the acquaintance of James Emerson, later Sir James Emerson Tennent, who like Nicholl was an early member of the Society and would become his most important patron.<sup>14</sup> By contrast to Hickey's early portrait practice in Dublin which largely depended on patrons drawn from the aristocracy and professions, when Nicholl became a full-time artist in the late 1820s, the Belfast art market relied on merchants and the professional classes for its support. Taking the decision to become a professional artist, Nicholl moved to London in 1830 where he took the time to study landscape paintings by Aelbert Cuyp (1620-1691), Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) and J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851). On his return to Ireland in 1832, and by now living in Dublin, Nicholl travelled extensively throughout the country working on antiquarian studies and sketching topographical views. He produced small, marketable watercolours, supplementing his income by teaching, book illustration, and mass-production of prints after his drawings.

Nicholl received no formal training in landscape art; nevertheless, developments in the teaching of landscape at the Dublin Society Schools are relevant to a discussion of his work as he collaborated on projects with graduates of the school and would have been aware of trends in art practice. From 1800 the School of Landscape and Ornament taught watercolour drawing resulting in a tradition in topographical, line and wash watercolours, which helped to shape Nicholl's early landscapes.<sup>15</sup> With increasing demand for landscape illustrations in printed books, engraving also became an integral part of the curriculum at this time; tuition in lithography was added to the curriculum in 1819.<sup>16</sup> These developments were closely associated with the growth of a domestic tourist industry. Travellers were

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<sup>13</sup> This biographical account of Nicholl is taken from Anglesea 1982: 132-51, Murtagh 2009 and Murtagh 2014: 386-88.

<sup>14</sup> See chapter one, p.39, footnote 8, for biographical notes concerning James Emerson's early career.

<sup>15</sup> Turpin 1986: 52.

<sup>16</sup> Turpin 1986: 51.

encouraged not only to record the views that they saw and experienced but also to buy illustrated guidebooks and prints of the most popular destinations. The earliest Irish artist to recognise the commercial potential of landscape prints was Jonathan Fisher (fl 1763-1809), whose interest in the medium may have been prompted by his connection with Paul Sandby (c.1739-1809). Fisher's patron and amateur artist, John Dawson, Earl of Portarlington, was a friend of Sandby, the first artist to make extensive use of aquatints in documenting and publishing views of the British landscape.<sup>17</sup> Fisher's publications include: *Picturesque Tours of Killarney* (1789), and *Scenery of Ireland* (1795) both comprising a series of aquatints accompanied by detailed notes of routes to follow and the best viewing points.<sup>18</sup>

As the title of his first publication cited above suggests, a key idea for the discussion of views such as those made by Fisher, is that of the picturesque. In general terms, to describe a landscape view as picturesque, is to suggest that it is as pretty as a picture. However, in the latter half of the eighteenth and continuing into the nineteenth century, the picturesque evolved as a distinct aesthetic which, depending on context, was open to multiple interpretations. Ideas concerning the picturesque were promulgated more by practice than theory; nevertheless an early codification is found in the writings of the Revd William Gilpin who, in *An Essay on Prints* (1768), defined 'Picturesque Beauty' as 'that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture'.<sup>19</sup> Gilpin encouraged domestic tourists and amateur artists to appreciate and document the beauties of the British countryside, publishing illustrated accounts of suitable tours, including details of routes and strategic viewing points between 1782 and 1802. He suggested that the artist should view the landscape as if it were a painting, using the conventions of classical landscape including sidescreens, *repoussoir* effects and spatial distinctions of foreground, middle ground and distance to organise the elements seen into a coherent pictorial unity. Variety was to be provided by routes meandering through the pictorial space, by ruggedness, ruins and contrasts of light and shade. Unlike in a classical view, the eye might also be encouraged to linger over naturalistic detail in the foreground.

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<sup>17</sup> Butler 2014: 251-3.

<sup>18</sup> O'Kane 2015: 79-80.

<sup>19</sup> As quoted in Bermingham 2002: 86. See Solkin 2015: 227, for an overview of the picturesque tour.



However, the aim was not to achieve topographical accuracy but rather the broad effect of a scene. Furthermore, in order to contribute to the overall effect, the artist was encouraged to omit disagreeable features or include some that were not actually present.

As noted above, Nicholl's landscapes are not readily aligned with the conventions of the picturesque. The contrast between his idiosyncratic approach to landscape and the picturesque is exemplified by a series of paintings he made throughout the 1830s in which coastal views stretching from Derry in the north of Ireland to Wicklow in the east to Killarney in the south-west of the country are seen through a bank of meticulously detailed wildflowers. Nicholl's 'flower paintings' are small in scale, schematic, decorative and very marketable; they also show that he had a predisposition to think of landscape in terms of abundance. Art historian Helena Murtagh has suggested that Nicholl painted his various views on-the-spot, perhaps with the aid of a graphic telescope, whilst the flower studies were added in the studio.<sup>20</sup> This argument would appear to be supported by the fact that Nicholl tended to paint the same range of flowers (poppies, cornflowers, harebells, foxgloves and daisies) regardless of habitat or differing times of blooming, presumably worked up from previous cut stem studies, made as he pursued his on-going interest in botanical studies. Examples of his 'flower paintings' include a view of Carrickfergus Castle, Co. Antrim painted around 1830 (fig. 4.1). The watercolour shows the Norman castle built in 1177 by John de Courcy on the northern shore of Belfast Lough but what immediately attracts the eye are the flowers which dominate the foreground. Nicholl has used bodycolour to highlight and differentiate the colours of the flowers and has combined this with the technique of scratching out to good effect. The latter has allowed him to clearly delineate the foliage, grasses and also the stems of the taller flowers. The depiction of overlarge foliage in the foreground of a landscape view is not unusual; it was a common feature of the work of Cuyp for example, whose work Nicholl had studied. However, the disparity in scale between the flowers in the foreground and the castle, which is emphasised by the use of differing viewpoints is

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<sup>20</sup> Murtagh, Vol 2, 2009: 4-5. The graphic telescope, patented in 1811 by Cornelius Varley (1781-1873), was a refined version of the camera obscura used to facilitate plein-air sketching and painting.

unique to Nicholl. Both the scale and detail of the flowers disrupt the viewing experience as the eye is arrested and does not move smoothly through pictorial space to the castle beyond. The worm's-eye view of the flowers is intimate, it is not a dominant viewpoint but rather emphasises the local nature of the landscape. Evidence of economic activity was rarely included in a picturesque view; a further detail to note however, in Nicholl's image, is the presence of the modern world in the historic coastal view: smoking chimneys can be seen in the town behind the castle. History and modern industry appear to meld seamlessly in the background but the local, in the form of the overlarge flowers, offers a disjunctive note. Unlike in a picturesque view where detail contributes to an overall harmonious whole suggestive of a supposed traditional order, this fragmented appearance potentially connects the image to an emerging sense of modernity.

In Ireland as in Britain, the aristocracy and well-to-do middle classes continued to experience Irish land by means of both picturesque views and tours well into the nineteenth century. A consideration that links the Irish picturesque view with issues relevant to the work of Nicholl in Ceylon is the militarisation of the Irish landscape through road building and garrisoning of troops. The construction of military roads in Ireland not only provided routes to previously inaccessible sites but also incidentally opened up new vistas to artists. Following the failed rebellion of 1798, military roads were constructed, running south from Dublin into the Wicklow Mountains, a rebel stronghold. In 1802, Thomas Sautelle Roberts (1760-1826) exhibited twelve watercolours commissioned by his patron the then lord-lieutenant, Lord Hardwicke, in the former Parliament building; one of these watercolours, *View of the Military Road from the Vicinity of the Upper Lough Bray* shows the road under construction (fig. 4.2). In many respects this is a typical picturesque view, with the eye being encouraged to linger over the detail provided in the foreground by the carefully described uniform of the Scottish soldier saluting Hardwicke mounted on his horse, before following the zigzag route of the new road through the illuminated middle ground to the distant hills. Contrasting areas of light and shade provide variety. The high viewpoint provides a vantage point but it also, immediately, suggests surveillance and control, in this instance, by Hardwicke and his entourage,

as ordinary soldiers and peasants labour in the background. The image of Hardwicke on his prancing horse evokes those of equestrian statues traditionally commissioned to celebrate military victories. However, the painting is more about the durability of colonial power than an instance of commemoration. The new road zigzags through the mountains whilst shafts of sunlight illuminate the soldiers' billets in the middle ground. This is not an army passing through a landscape; on the contrary, it is inhabiting it while constructing and controlling routes through it. Images of soldiers not actively engaged in warfare, but rather in, surveying, building infrastructure or even at leisure, are significant because they not only tend to normalise a military presence in a colonised landscape but may also go some way to justifying it if the soldiers are involved in an 'improving' project.

Ruins in a colonial landscape are also open to varying interpretations. As Finola O'Kane argues, a ruined abbey, for example, may provide picturesque interest in an eighteenth-century English landscape but it also suggests English liberty from papal control following the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s.<sup>21</sup> In Ireland, by contrast, where the majority of the population were Catholic, such ruins may be considered expressive of religious intolerance, even more so where the former monastic lands were incorporated into a Protestant gentleman's demesne. Thus, tensions due to differences in ethnicity and religion, as well as class, need to be considered in the interpretation of an Irish picturesque view.<sup>22</sup> Ruins and ancient monuments take on differing connotations when considered within imperialist discourse. The coloniser may contrast such evidence of a civilised past with the supposedly stagnant present-day society of the colonised, reinforcing his own sense of superiority as progressive and modern.<sup>23</sup> A further claim, one that also places the coloniser in a position of superiority, is to maintain that, due to lack of technical skill, the indigenous population was incapable of building its ancient monuments without external aid.<sup>24</sup> Irish artists who applied an antiquarian approach to their study of the

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<sup>21</sup> O'Kane 2013: 3,16.

<sup>22</sup> O'Kane 2013: 2-16.

<sup>23</sup> See the introduction to this thesis, pp.18-19, for a discussion concerning the intersection of primitivist and imperial discourse.

<sup>24</sup> See Cohn 1996: 95, and below pp.208-11, for an analysis of this topic in the context of India and Ceylon.

Irish landscape challenged such imperialist discourse, firstly, by considering Ireland's historic landscape in a positive way, as evidence of the richness of Irish history and culture rather than stasis and secondly, by studying the material evidence, that is to say the details of the monuments themselves, they demonstrated that the local Irish had the requisite mechanical skill to build them. One of the most significant of such artists was the draughtsman, writer, Irish music archivist, and academic, George Petrie (1789/90-1866).

Petrie is relevant to any discussion of Nicholl's early career in Ireland. During the 1830s, Nicholl worked on collaborative projects which brought him into contact with other Irish artists, including Petrie.<sup>25</sup> Nicholl travelled extensively throughout Ireland not only sketching but also collecting information on ancient monuments and sites. In June 1832, Petrie became joint editor (with the Revd. Caesar Otway) of the newly founded *Dublin Penny Journal* to which he contributed articles whilst Nicholl provided woodcut illustrations. Established in response to the success of the English *Penny Magazine for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* which was described by Petrie's biographer Sir William Stokes as 'too foreign or too British for Irish sympathies', the *Dublin Penny Journal* was intended to be more 'generally applicable to Ireland'.<sup>26</sup> Its target audience was the urban, literate middle class. In March 1833 Petrie published an article, illustrated by Nicholl, in the *Dublin Penny Journal* concerning Newgrange, one of several Neolithic passage graves in the Brú na Bóinne complex in County Meath. Petrie challenged scholarship which stated that the ancient Irish were incapable of constructing such monuments.<sup>27</sup> He refuted claims that it had been built by the Danes. According to Petrie, Newgrange, 'a monument of human labour', was not only built by the indigenous people but served to underwrite comparisons of the ancient Irish with ancient Egypt and Greece.<sup>28</sup> In his concluding

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<sup>25</sup> For example: *Picturesque sketches of some of the finest landscape and coastal scenery of Ireland from Drawings by G.Petrie, R.H.A., A.Nicholl and H.O'Neill* 1835, Nicholl published his own book in 1836 *Twelve Drawings on the Northern Coast of Ireland*, and was one of the artists selected to illustrate Mr and Mrs S.C.Hall's *Ireland: its Scenery, Character etc* 3 vols 1841-43, providing over one hundred sketches and drawings. The Halls had been researching their books from 1825 and Nicholl provided them with information concerning ancient sites as well as drawings. Anglesea 1982: 136.

<sup>26</sup> Stokes 1868: 67.

<sup>27</sup> Petrie 1833: 306.

<sup>28</sup> Petrie 1833: 305.

paragraph Petrie comments on a woodcut based on an original drawing by Nicholl, made expressly for the *Journal*, of the eastern recess of the structure's main chamber (fig. 4.3). He commends Nicholl 'as a young artist of undoubted ability, whose talents, we are persuaded, only require the fosterage they merit to make them, ere long, reflect honour on our country'.<sup>29</sup> Nicholl's involvement with Petrie is significant, not only because it underlined his willingness to collaborate on projects, mass-producing his work across a variety of media but also, through his association with Petrie, he learnt how to closely observe and document the material evidence of ancient sites. As will be discussed below, this stood Nicholl in good stead when he travelled to Ceylon.

However, Petrie was not the first draughtsman to consider Irish ruins and antiquities in a positive way. The Dutch antiquarian and draughtsman Gabriel Beranger (1729/30-1817) had documented sites throughout Ireland from 1765 to 1780, producing albums of watercolours and aquatints which not only contained his own work but also copies after other artists including Fisher and his patron, the Earl of Portarlington.<sup>30</sup> In ambition, Beranger's albums resembled Sandby's *Virtuosi's Museum; containing Select Views in England, Scotland and Ireland* (1778-81), similarly presenting a topographical overview of the country whilst simultaneously emphasising the importance of locality and place.<sup>31</sup> However, Petrie went further than Beranger in promoting a unifying, non-sectarian form of cultural nationalism mediated through Ireland's historic landscape, which he believed to be a repository of Irish history and culture.<sup>32</sup> Petrie did so at a significant moment in Irish history when for the first time Irish nationalism became equated with Catholicism.<sup>33</sup> Study of Petrie's work highlights not only the existence of competing nationalisms in Ireland

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<sup>29</sup> Petrie 1833: 306.

<sup>30</sup> Nic Ghabhann 2014: 176-7. Of French Huguenot extraction, Beranger moved to Dublin around 1750. A branch of his family had previously migrated to the city.

<sup>31</sup> Sandby never visited Ireland, his Irish views are after Portarlington, Bonehill 2009: 187.

<sup>32</sup> Petrie came from a Presbyterian background; his father, also an artist, had supported the United Irishmen but the younger Petrie, depending on government patronage, was not overtly political. Neither Petrie nor his biographer Sir William Stokes advocated Ireland's separation from England but both validated its particularity and difference. See below pp. 188-90.

<sup>33</sup> Bartlett 2011: 257-66. In 1829 Catholic emancipation had been achieved following a successful campaign led by the lawyer and politician Daniel O'Connell. O'Connell linked his sense of Irishness to Catholicism, castigating Irish Protestants as 'no better than foreigners to us'. O'Connell as quoted in Bartlett 2011: 257.

but also, the use of landscape in asserting a political consciousness amongst the colonised.

Through his collaboration with artists like Petrie, Nicholl participated in an intellectual milieu which validated Ireland's historic landscape. However, unlike that of Petrie, Nicholl's interest in the Irish landscape was not limited to antiquarian sites. In August 1834 the *Dublin Penny Journal* carried an article, concerning the construction of the Dublin to Kingstown railway, the second-oldest passenger railway in the world. The article was illustrated with two woodcuts by Nicholl, whose apparent interest in the railway stands in contrast to the attitude of Petrie, who had been more interested in describing the rock formations exposed by the railway cuttings and the antiquities in the vicinity, employing his protégé George Victor Du Noyer for the purpose.<sup>34</sup> Nicholl, aware of the commercial potential of the subject, also published a series of lithographs entitled *Five views of the Dublin and Kingstown Railway* in October 1834 (fig. 4.4). He also produced a cheaper version comprising woodcuts by himself and other artists which was published in conjunction with the *Dublin Penny Journal: Thirteen views of the Dublin and Kingstown Railways*.<sup>35</sup> In contrast to Hickey's eighteenth-century fine art practice, Nicholl's was commercial and collaborative; links to antiquarian scholarship did not preclude either mass production of images or involvement with the penny-press.

Technological advances in printing allowed Nicholl to target a much broader market than was available to Hickey in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, he too experienced a lack of financial security, travelling to Dublin, Scotland and London in search of work. In 1838, the Fine Arts Committee of the Royal Dublin Society recommended Nicholl for the post of Master of the School of Landscape and Ornament, but local politics and nepotism resulted in the appointment going elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> A prolific painter, Nicholl exhibited at the Belfast Association of Artists from the time of its inception in 1836 to 1838, the Northern Irish Art Union in 1842, the Royal Academy from 1832 to 1854, the Royal Society of

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<sup>34</sup> Coffey in Figgis (ed) 2014: 240-2.

<sup>35</sup> Adams 1984: 31.

<sup>36</sup> Turpin 1986: 42.

British Artists 1831 to 1866, the British Institute and the New Watercolour Society. He had a long association with the Royal Hibernian Academy being elected an associate in 1837 and a full member in 1860.<sup>37</sup> Despite his apparent success however, Nicholl always supplemented his income by giving drawing lessons. When the opportunity to travel to Ceylon as the first teacher of landscape painting, scientific drawing and design at the Colombo Academy arose in 1846, Nicholl accepted the offer with alacrity.

An analysis of Nicholl's early career in Ireland is necessary if the form his art practice took in Ceylon is to be fully understood. He continued to pursue his interest in botanical studies and closely observed drawings of antiquities that he developed in Ireland. Furthermore, since his early days as a compositor with the *Northern Whig*. Nicholl maintained a close association with the press in Ireland: not only advertising his pictures and his availability to teach art in Belfast newspapers but also contributing sketches to be engraved in illustrated journals. Developments in printing techniques encouraged the growth of the illustrated press to which Nicholl subsequently contributed both written texts and drawings based on his travels to Ceylon. His images reached a large audience, determining in part, how Ceylonese land was represented in both Ireland and Britain.

## Section Two: A Colonial Education in Art Practice

Nicholl left Ireland for Ceylon in 1846, twenty two years after the death of Hickey in Madras. When Hickey first set sail for India in 1780 emigration to the subcontinent was relatively unusual; from the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, a more sustained period of migration from Ireland occurred. As the British Empire expanded, the demand for manpower increased; this demand coincided with a period of unprecedented population growth in Ireland: numbering 5 million in the

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<sup>37</sup> Biographical details are taken from Anglesea 1982: 132-51, Murtagh 2009 and Murtagh 2014: 386-88.

1790s its population had reached 8.5 million by the 1840s. For the poor and those from modest backgrounds, the Empire offered the opportunity of work. Both the East India Company and the Royal Army had been recruiting in Ireland since the last decades of the eighteenth century. By 1813 the East India Company had established recruiting offices in Belfast, Dublin, Enniskillen and Limerick, supplying almost fifty per cent of Bengal's European recruits between 1815 and 1850.<sup>38</sup> By 1830, forty two per cent of private soldiers in the Royal Army were Irish-born, the majority of whom were Catholic.<sup>39</sup> Paradoxically, Ireland not only had British troops garrisoned on its land but also provided a vast number of recruits for deployment in Southern Asia.<sup>40</sup> Most of those recruited were of low income, including both unskilled labourers and artisans and clerks who had little opportunity for advancement in Ireland.<sup>41</sup> However, Ireland not only provided soldiers; its universities and scientific institutions adapted their curriculums in order to supply imperial state bodies, for example, the civil administration, medical services and ordnance surveys, with suitably qualified personnel.<sup>42</sup> Employed by a colonial state institution, Nicholl followed an established route to Southern Asia; where he differed was that he travelled to Ceylon rather than India.

Economic considerations played a large part in Nicholl's move to Ceylon. By the 1840s and back in Belfast, not only were other artists competing with Nicholl in a limited market, but also the Belfast linen industry was experiencing a period of recession which resulted in a drop in patronage of the arts. Most seriously, the Irish potato crop failed in 1845 and again in 1846 with catastrophic consequences. The starving flooded into Belfast looking for work; disease was rife and in autumn 1846, moreover, the town suffered a devastating typhus epidemic, which spread through

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<sup>38</sup> Crosbie 2012: 85.

<sup>39</sup> Kenny 2004: 104. Despite being prohibited from bearing arms under the Penal Laws, Catholics had been covertly enlisted into the army of the East India Company since the 1760s and subsequently into the Royal Army. Crosbie 2012: 73-5

<sup>40</sup> The 78<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, for example, a Highland Regiment, was stationed in Ireland from 1817 to 1826. Before being deployed to Ceylon in 1826, it ran a recruitment campaign in County Cork. Anon 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Kenny 2004: 105, Crosbie 2012: 72-5.

<sup>42</sup> Irish universities included Trinity College Dublin, the medical school established in the Belfast Academical Institute in 1835 and the Queen's Colleges established in Belfast, Cork and Galway in 1849. Unlike Trinity College, the latter were all non-denominational, providing an education for Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter alike. Crosbie 2012: 168, 186-7.



all levels of society.<sup>43</sup> An appointment outside Ireland must have seemed an attractive option to Nicholl. He had always supplemented his income as a draughtsman by teaching art. Meanwhile, his one important patron, Sir James Emerson Tennent, had been appointed as Civil Secretary to the Governor of Ceylon in 1845. These two factors came together when Nicholl, with the support of Tennent, applied for the post of teacher of landscape painting, scientific drawing and design in the department of Drawing, Planning and Surveying at the Colombo Academy in Ceylon. In August 1846, accompanied by his family, Nicholl left Ireland for Ceylon.

Britain's colonial relationship with Ceylon differed markedly from the one it pursued with India; though the nature of British interests in the subcontinent had changed since Hickey arrived in Calcutta, the commercial centre of British India, in 1784. Whereas, throughout the eighteenth century, Britain had traded in luxury items with India, the British economy was now shifting from one based primarily on commerce and trade to one in which the subcontinent provided British industry with both raw materials and a market for its mass-produced goods.<sup>44</sup> In addition, and crucially, as British colonial ambitions expanded, India, like Ireland, became a source of manpower, supplying not only labourers but also soldiers.<sup>45</sup> By 1835 the East India Company's army was larger than the entire Royal Army; in Bengal alone it had sixty-four regiments of native infantry.<sup>46</sup> Funded by Indian revenue, this standing army facilitated British expansion into the north west of the subcontinent and into South East Asia, opening up new opportunities for trade.<sup>47</sup>

In contrast to India, British Ceylon was ruled almost from the outset as a colony and garrison state. Initially governed by the East India Company through its Madras Presidency, by 1798 Ceylon had its own governor, Frederick North, who reported to both Calcutta and London. In 1802 Ceylon became a Crown Colony,

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<sup>43</sup> Beckett 1969: 342-5.

<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of the complex reasons for a subsequent decline in Indian manufacturing and industry, see Washbrook 2012: 44-73, Tharror 2017: 5-16, 27-35.

<sup>45</sup> Washbrook 2012: 54.

<sup>46</sup> Darwin 2008:264-5.

<sup>47</sup> Washbrook 2012: 54-5. Ceylon in 1796, Java 1811, Singapore 1819, Burma 1824 came under British rule. By 1839, the Chinese had been forced to open the port of Canton to free trade with Britain.

coming under direct government control from London. Although hoping to break the Dutch monopoly of the international cinnamon trade and later developing a plantation economy in Ceylon, Britain's initial interest in the island was strategic. Following the fall of the Dutch Republic to France in 1795, and the founding in the Netherlands of a state based on the French revolutionary model known as the Batavian Republic, the British annexed the Cape of Good Hope, along with the Dutch factories in both India and Ceylon in 1796 in order to prevent the French gaining strategically important territories.<sup>48</sup> Ceylon had close connections to the Indian subcontinent and to South East Asia by reason of trade, movements of people and religion; it also had links with more distant lands including China and the east coast of Africa. However, since the seventeenth century, much of the overseas trade in the Indian Ocean had been controlled by European maritime powers rather than by land-based Southern Asian powers.<sup>49</sup> The Portuguese occupied parts of the island from 1594 until 1658 and the Dutch from 1640 until 1796 when they ceded Ceylon to the British. At this point, Dutch coastal territories encircled the entire island but the central kingdom of Kandy remained nominally independent (fig. 4.5). Following a series of Anglo-Kandyan wars, Kandy fell in 1815; the king was expelled and the British took possession of the *Delada* or the Buddha's Tooth Relic which, for Buddhists, gave them a symbolic right to rule the entire island as successors to the Kandyan monarchy. Anglo-Kandyan relations were, nevertheless, punctuated by periods of resistance, most notably the rebellions of 1817-1818 and 1848, necessitating a large military presence on the island.<sup>50</sup>

Britain's colonial presence in early-nineteenth century Ceylon was very different from that which it had in late-eighteenth century India. A long history of commerce and trade with India had resulted in a resident population of British merchants and traders willing to commission paintings from professional artists, who, like Hickey, had travelled to the subcontinent in anticipation of such patronage. Early colonial Ceylon, which was essentially a garrison state, offered no possibility of similar patronage. The earliest images of Ceylon to reach Britain were by the Dutch

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<sup>48</sup> Gastra 2002: 66-7.

<sup>49</sup> Washbrook 2012: 60.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of Sri Lanka's history as a European Colony see Sivasundaram 2013: 3-95.

artist Philip Baldaeus (1632-72); the first by a British draughtsman were produced by Robert Knox (1641-1720), a merchant, who, in 1681 published *An Historical Relation of Ceylon* illustrated by copper plate engravings, some after his own sketches. In the early nineteenth century, artists and draughtsmen came to British Ceylon for a variety of reasons. Joseph Eudelin de Joinville (1756-1837), a Corsican who had previously worked in Pondicherry, for example, came to Ceylon as a member of North's staff and was employed as a draughtsman on the first survey of the island. The watercolourist Henry Salt (1780-1827) accompanied George Annesley, Viscount Valentia, on his alternative Grand Tour, arriving in Ceylon in 1803. Valentia's journals were later published with coloured plates after Salt's landscape views.<sup>51</sup> Samuel Daniell (1775-1811), brother of William and nephew of Thomas Daniell, lived in Ceylon for five years, sketching its people and natural history, before his death in 1811.<sup>52</sup> However, the largest group of draughtsmen to visually document the landscape of Ceylon in the first half of the nineteenth century were soldiers. As a civilian and a professional draughtsman, Nicholl was an exception.

Nicholl travelled to Ceylon at a time of greatly accelerated British imperial expansion. Factors contributing to this expansion included improvements in transport and consequently in communications.<sup>53</sup> The development of the railways and the introduction of steamships permitted the movement not only of goods and people, including military personnel, but also of information, at much greater speed and on a larger scale. Colonial transnational networks of trade, banking, law and economic botany were extended and reinforced. Furthermore, all was now underpinned by an increasingly coherent imperial bureaucracy which promoted, amongst other things, policies of evangelisation, Anglicisation and utilitarianism.<sup>54</sup> These three policies determined the ethos of the Colombo Academy. Prompted by the recommendations of the Schools Commission of 1834, Horton established the first government school on the island, when the Hill Street Academy, founded by the

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<sup>51</sup> Annesley 1809.

<sup>52</sup> Engravings after Samuel Daniell's Ceylonese sketches appeared in Thomas and William Daniell's *Oriental Scenery* published in six volumes between 1795 and 1806.

<sup>53</sup> Arnold 2005: 17-21, Darwin 2008: 14-27.

<sup>54</sup> See Sivasundaram 2013: 283-305.

Revd. Joseph Marsh in 1835, became the Colombo Academy in January 1836.<sup>55</sup> The pupils' origins reflected the cosmopolitanism of Ceylonese society which included Sinhalese, Malabars (Ceylonese of Southern Indian descent, known as Tamils today), Malays, Chinese, Africans and Eurasians or Burghers. Burghers were of mixed race descended from Europeans, particularly the Dutch, the Portuguese (as in India, 'Portuguese' was often used in a general sense to describe a Catholic), and latterly the British. During Nicholl's time well over half the boys attending were children of Burghers or of Britons married to Burghers or Sinhalese. The rest of the pupils were lowland Sinhalese. The curriculum, which was taught in English, featured theology, moral and natural philosophy, mathematics, English Literature and the Classics.

Although a Department of Drawing, Planning and Surveying was part of the original school structure, Nicholl was the first to fill the post of art teacher. A correspondence which preceded Nicholl's appointment, between Sir Colin Campbell, Governor of Ceylon, the Dublin-born, Revd. Dr Barcroft Boake, principal of the Colombo Academy and two Secretaries of State for the Colonies, firstly Lord Edward Stanley and then William Gladstone, is noteworthy because it highlights the debate as to what form the art instruction should take.<sup>56</sup> In many respects the instruction was intended to be similar to that offered to military cadets; the Revd. Boake requested a teacher of practical surveying whilst Campbell felt that the successful candidate should, in addition, be a landscape artist able to teach the preparation and colouring of maps and engineering plans. Where the proposed instruction differed from that offered to military cadets, was in Campbell's insistence that an education in design should also be given.<sup>57</sup> Nicholl responded to these demands not only by

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<sup>55</sup> The School Commission had been set up under the auspices of the Commission of Eastern Enquiry established by the colonial office in 1831. Its aim was to provide a coherent educational policy based on the English model and underpinned by the ideology of Utilitarianism which promoted principles of virtue through work. Its success was uneven and characterised by in-fighting amongst the various Christian missionary groups on the island. It was also criticised by those who proposed education through vernacular languages rather than English. Sivasundaram 2013: 299-305.

<sup>56</sup> Whilst conducting research for her M.Litt thesis, 'Andrew Nicholl: Artist, Teacher and Traveller', submitted to University College Dublin in 2009, Helena Murtagh located this correspondence in the National Archive at Kew: Colonial Offices Dispatches and Correspondence, Ceylon, CO. 54 232, 1846. Copies of the letters appear in an Appendix to her thesis which have been gratefully used as a resource.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Boake to Tennent, December 22, 1845, Campbell to Lord Stanley, February 13, 1846 in Murtagh 2009, Vol 2 Appendix 3.

outlining his experience both as a landscape painter and teacher but also by emphasising his connection to the Dublin Society School of Landscape and Ornament, which promoted the decorative aspect of landscape. In addition, he noted that he had taught drawing to officers connected to the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and had, in his turn, received instruction in 'plan drawing' from a former pupil, Captain Dawson of the Royal Engineers, then based in the Ordnance Department at Somerset House.<sup>58</sup>

Campbell's insistence on education in design reflects wider concerns of the period. Design as it intersected with manufacturing industries, trade and art education became an important question in contemporary debate. As Tennent highlighted in a speech to the House of Commons in 1842, a hierarchical distinction was made in Britain between the fine arts and the decorative arts, which 'combined utility with ornament, and which formed the great staple of the manufactures of Europe'.<sup>59</sup> The belief persisted in Britain that 'art lost its dignity and forfeited its privileges the moment it encountered utility'.<sup>60</sup> However, as Tennent further remarked, a lack of excellence in design meant that Britain struggled to compete, for example, in the market for luxury textiles, with its European neighbours (particularly the French), despite mechanisation and cheapness of production.<sup>61</sup> The necessity of good design and its role in manufacturing industries prompted the establishment of twenty-two Government Schools of Design in Ireland and Britain from 1837 to 1852.<sup>62</sup>

Instruction in technical drawing obviously served the needs of empire, but the education in Western design offered at the Colombo Academy also facilitated the expansion of Britain's industrialised trading empire. The introduction of government-

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<sup>58</sup> Nicholl to Gladstone, March 17, 1846, Nicholl to Gladstone, March 30, 1846, J.Hawes to Campbell June 26, 1846 in Murtagh 2009, Vol 2 Appendix 3.

<sup>59</sup> Hansard 1842: 667. Tennent was returned as MP for Belfast in 1832, serving in Westminster, with some intermissions, until 1845 and his appointment as Civil Secretary to the colonial Governor of Ceylon. From 1841-44 he served as joint secretary to the Board of Control and subsequently as secretary to the India Board. His interest in design meant he was responsible for the passing of the Copyright of Design Bill in 1842, having published a two volume *Treatise on the Copyright of Design for printed fabrics* in 1841.

<sup>60</sup> Hansard 1842: 668.

<sup>61</sup> Hansard 1842: 677.

<sup>62</sup> See chapter one, p.40.

sponsored colonial art education to Ceylon occurred early in comparison to India where schools opened in Madras in 1850, Calcutta in 1854, Bombay in 1856 and Lahore in 1875. This priority may have been due to the fact that Ceylon was smaller and, more contained, but it is also significant that, from the outset, it was ruled by an interventionist colonial government rather than a trading company. The instruction in Madras and Lahore was orientated towards the decorative arts and the craft industry; the schools in Calcutta and Bombay additionally offered instruction in fine arts with students being taught Western conventions of academic art.<sup>63</sup> All four emphasised the importance of the skill of drawing. The Colombo Academy differed in that it offered an education in technical drawing as well as in landscape art and design.<sup>64</sup> On the one hand, by training locals in the techniques of map and engineering drawing, the expense of bringing skilled draughtsmen out from England was obviated; on the other hand, by also offering lessons in drawing and design, indigenous craft industries could be developed in a manner commensurate with British systems of manufacture and commerce. As Campbell wrote: 'Ceylon is remarkable for the skill of the natives in Cabinet work and carving on wood, in which they rival the Chinese, but their utter destitution in any knowledge of design render their talents comparatively valueless, whilst its diffusion would give rise to a profitable branch of manufacturers.'<sup>65</sup> Likewise, Tennent, while commending the Sinhalese for their skill in both woodcarving and tortoise-shell work, deplored their ignorance of design.<sup>66</sup> Both Campbell and Tennent were thus critical in their assessment of the indigenous population's expertise in this area. Not only were they applying external, Western standards of industrial design to Ceylonese art but also, more generally, their highlighting of a perceived lack of ability in the local population was orientalist, *a sensu* Said, in its justification of a colonial presence.<sup>67</sup>

In many respects, the Academy art school was similar in its aims to the Belfast Government School of Design, the first state funded, dedicated art school in Belfast

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<sup>63</sup> Mathur 2007: 92-108, Kantawala 2012: 208-222, Tarapor 1980: 53-81.

<sup>64</sup> As discussed in chapter three, pp.150-51, the Military Orphan Asylums in India trained boys in the skills of military draughtsmen.

<sup>65</sup> Campbell to Lord Stanley, February 13, 1846 in Murtagh 2009, Vol 2 Appendix 3.

<sup>66</sup> Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 108.

<sup>67</sup> Said 2003: 39-41.

founded in 1849.<sup>68</sup> Housed in the Belfast Academical Institution, it trained artisans as designers for the local textile industry.<sup>69</sup> However, where the two differed significantly was in the consequences that British intervention in the long-standing craft tradition in Ceylon had for both cultural practice and social structure. The vernacular craft industry was based on a system of hereditary family apprenticeships and guilds situated in local communities.<sup>70</sup> Larger projects of temple carving and decoration came under the patronage of the Kandyan king and many traditional decorative motifs had a religious significance.<sup>71</sup> The introduction of education in design geared towards Western commerce, production and efficiency thus undermined the traditional intersection of art, family and religion. The undermining of local tradition was further demonstrated by British plans for the display of Ceylonese work at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Originally conceived by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, the exhibition was intended to showcase progress made in all the society's disciplines with exhibitors from around the world. To the dismay of local commentators, the British administration in Ceylon laid down criteria for wood and ivory carving that they deemed to be representative of the arts of the island.<sup>72</sup> Local artists were to produce carved pieces ornamented with figures, flowers and fruit, all of which were to be strictly Ceylonese.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the colonial administration, rather than the Ceylonese themselves, decided what counted as vernacular design. This raises certain questions: what constitutes the indigenous in a society that has experienced waves of colonisation and how may such a society be represented in an authentic manner?

Questions of who or what was indigenous in nineteenth-century British Ceylon revolved round matters of religion, ethnicity and language as they pertained to the Burgher, Sinhalese and Tamil communities.<sup>74</sup> Matters were further

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<sup>68</sup> Black 2006: 16. This is a century after the establishment of the Dublin Society Schools which were funded by the Irish Parliament. See chapter one pp.39-40.

<sup>69</sup> Belfast Academical Institution was founded by public subscription, and incorporated by parliament in 1810, with the aim of providing an education for all, regardless of religion. Wright 2012b: 160-170 Like the Colombo Academy it was both a school and a college.

<sup>70</sup> Jones 2008: 385.

<sup>71</sup> Holt 1996: 42-66, Sivasundaram 2013: 136, 140, 178.

<sup>72</sup> Nell (ed.) July/August, 1851: 140.

<sup>73</sup> Jones 2008: 389.

<sup>74</sup> On the place of the Burghers in Sri Lankan society see Roberts et al 1989: 12-50.

complicated in the 1840s by the emergence of an anglicised, predominantly Burgher, urban elite. Burghers were described by Tennent as the 'middle class' of Ceylon but their place in the island's society did not fall neatly into such a Western classification.<sup>75</sup> Vital to the running of the early civil administration in British Ceylon, Burghers were disliked by both the British and 'native' elites.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Burgher society was not homogenous but hierarchical, with Burghers of Dutch extraction perceived as being superior to those of Portuguese descent.<sup>77</sup> The historian Michael Roberts has characterised Burghers as 'people in between', that is to say neither Western nor native.<sup>78</sup> In certain respects they were what Homi Bhabha has described as 'inappropriate' colonial subjects.<sup>79</sup> Many were English speakers, educated by the Colombo Academy; they were thus, in Bhabha's phrase, 'almost the same, but not quite' as the colonising British.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the Burghers constituted in themselves a disavowal of otherness which challenged normalised knowledge of the colonised as inferior and the coloniser as superior; this challenge in turn, undermined colonial authority.<sup>81</sup>

The Burghers did not directly oppose British rule but did have the potential to challenge it.<sup>82</sup> From 1850 to 1852, Burgher graduates of the Academy, inspired by the European movement of Romantic nationalism and Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy, published a journal, *Young Ceylon*, dedicated to the 'Spirit of Enquiry'.<sup>83</sup> Through the writing of poetry inspired by the Ceylonese landscape, they helped to forge a patriotic Ceylonese consciousness which opposed British authoritarianism and racial prejudice.<sup>84</sup> *Young Ceylon*, while professing an admiration for both English poetry and painting, declared that only the Ceylonese themselves could adequately

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<sup>75</sup> Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 70.

<sup>76</sup> Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 70, Sivasundaram 2013: 292-9.

<sup>77</sup> Roberts 1989: 12.

<sup>78</sup> Roberts 1989: 48.

<sup>79</sup> Bhabha 2010: 122 and 123-6.

<sup>80</sup> Bhabha 2010: 122

<sup>81</sup> Bhabha 2010:122-3, 130.

<sup>82</sup> In response to criticism of their journal's title, the editors of *Young Ceylon*, discussed below, declared themselves to be both moderate and loyal. Nell (ed.). March 1850: 25.

<sup>83</sup> Nell (ed.). July 1850: 119. February 1850: frontispiece. The motto of *Young Ceylon*, as appears on the frontispiece, was a translation of Schlegel's dedication to Tieck: 'We *live* united for Art and Knowledge, and *emulate* one another in various competitions'.

<sup>84</sup> Nell (ed.). November 1851: 178.



represent their land: the European who ‘attempts to represent the beauties of an Indian clime like ours, may find his utmost skills inadequate to the purpose’.<sup>85</sup> In Ireland, a similar movement, Young Ireland, had been founded in 1839; likewise inspired by Young Italy, it opposed British rule through the non-sectarian, unifying forces of myths, folktales and the Irish language. Its journal, *The Nation*, was founded in 1842 by Thomas Davis with a view to fostering national spirit and inculcating a sense of national self-respect. Davis also called for a national art and improvements in art education ‘to facilitate the creation of some great spirit’.<sup>86</sup> The similarity between the origins and aims of Young Ireland, *The Nation* and *Young Ceylon* are obvious. The challenge that the latter of these posed to British rule was thus mediated through contemporary theories of European radicalism.

Consideration of *Young Ceylon* demonstrates that while landscape, in the context of the mid-nineteenth century British Empire, may more usually be discussed today in terms of power and possession by the coloniser, it also had the potential to become a medium of oppositional values. Scholars such as Michelle Facos and Susie Protschky have highlighted the use of landscape in the expression of a national consciousness in other colonial contexts, notably that of Swedish Norway in the 1880s and Dutch Indonesia in the 1900s respectively.<sup>87</sup> However, the subversive potential of a political consciousness derived from pride in the land and national culture was highlighted in Ireland at a much earlier date. From 1833 to 1841, scholars, including Nicholl’s associate George Petrie, were employed by the Topographical Department of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland to compile a topographical, natural and cultural history, known as the *Ordnance Memoir*, which was intended to complement the cartographic survey of the island conducted from 1825 to 1846 by officers of the Royal Engineers. When the work on the *Memoir* was suspended in 1840, ostensibly due to lack of funds, the Nationalist press in Ireland claimed that it was due to fear of patriotic pride in the land on the part of the

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<sup>85</sup> Nell (ed.). February 1850: 4.

<sup>86</sup> Davis 1843 ‘National Art’ in Cullen 2000: 67. The leaders of Young Ireland were predominantly Protestant; as the cause of Ireland became increasingly associated with Catholicism, they campaigned to keep sectarian differences out of national politics. Beckett 1969: 331-35.

<sup>87</sup> Facos 1998: 29-32, Protschky 2014: 391.

Government.<sup>88</sup> A later article in *The Nation* suggested that the *Memoir* 'put into every Irishman's hands a full account of the shape and production of his parish, his country and his island. It would nationalise the country'.<sup>89</sup> *Young Ceylon* too offers an early example of landscape taking on a national significance in a colonial context.

It is possible that Nicholl helped inspire the creation of *Young Ceylon* since his time as a teacher at the Academy coincided with the period during which its main protagonists attended the college. An article published in 1850 in *Young Ceylon* credited him with being one of the first to introduce watercolour painting to the island.<sup>90</sup> A report in a subsequent edition of the journal referred to an article which had appeared in the Belfast newspaper, the *Northern Whig*, concerning the fine arts in Ceylon.<sup>91</sup> This reference to an Irish provincial newspaper to which Nicholl had close ties suggests that he maintained contact with his former pupils on his return to Ireland. Although *Young Ceylon* validated the Ceylonese landscape through Romantic poetry rather than visual culture, the language and art of landscape were intertwined in Nicholl's work; he wrote Romantic verse himself, for example, publishing a poem entitled 'My Native Land' in 1844. Neither Nicholl and Petrie nor the contributors to *Young Ceylon* advocated separation from the British Empire but they all understood that a sense of place mattered. In his biography of Petrie, Sir William Stokes, wrote about the art of government (he does not overtly refer to a specifically colonial government, but a colonial context is implicit) drawing parallels with John Ruskin's principles of landscape art. Ruskin claimed that the modern landscape view must not be idealised nor purely mimetic but must seize and intensify the 'specific character of the object', that is to say, draw out the individuality of elements of the composition. Each element should then be placed in its proper position relative to others, thus reinforcing the 'great impression the picture is intended to convey'. If the specific characteristic was not emphasised, ruin or destruction was the consequence of the 'violation of natural distinctions'.<sup>92</sup> Drawing on Ruskin, Stokes declared: 'National distinctions should be precious in the eyes of all men, and England

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<sup>88</sup> McWilliams 2008: 28-32, Murray, Leerssen, Dunne 2004: 8.

<sup>89</sup> Anon March 1843: 3.

<sup>90</sup> Nell (ed.). February 1850: 4.

<sup>91</sup> Nell (ed.). March 1850: 41-3.

<sup>92</sup> Ruskin 1998: 207-8.

should seek to cherish, not extinguish them in these nations that have passed beneath her rule'.<sup>93</sup> For Stokes, if national distinctions are obliterated rather than nurtured in a similar manner to the emphasis of natural distinctions in a well-composed landscape view, true harmony between coloniser and colonised is not possible and the way to self-respect in the colonised nation is lost.<sup>94</sup> To his mind, a landscape view was thus inherently political. Likewise, the contributors to *Young Ceylon* and members of Young Ireland demonstrated an awareness of the political dimension of landscape.

Analysis of Nicholl's involvement in art education in Colombo underlines how draughtsmanship could serve the purpose of empire, not only in the obvious case of mapping and surveying but also through instruction in Western design. The discussion concerning design links the education received in Ceylon to that taught in the government-funded schools of design in Ireland and Britain, all of which facilitated the expansion of Britain's increasingly industrialised manufacturing base. In addition, the fact that Nicholl was an Irish artist who had been active in Ireland when questions of landscape increasingly intersected with national politics, opens up the discussion of Ceylonese land in a way that would not otherwise be possible. Intra-imperial comparisons made between Ireland and Ceylon result in an analysis that moves beyond scholarship concerning art, nation and empire that more usually considers landscape and concepts of nationhood in this period solely in terms of the coloniser. It highlights both the oppositional potential of landscape and its importance to an emerging cultural nationalism in the colonised.

### Section Three: Nicholl as Imperial Traveller

British imperial expansion through the acquisition of land was a physical process aided by the extension of control over land by means of mapping and surveys. However, the appropriation of land at a discursive level was also significant. Nicholl

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<sup>93</sup> Stokes 1868: 326.

<sup>94</sup> Stokes 1868: 326-7.

not only documented his Ceylonese travels in the form of watercolours and drawings but also wrote and published illustrated accounts of his journeys. For the Irish and British public, a popular means of knowing distant lands was through travel writing, much of which was enhanced by illustrations drawn on-the-spot; the eye witness account conferred authority. Travellers tended to follow similar routes producing written and visual accounts, which through repetition contributed to a constructed reality of the places they described.<sup>95</sup> Thus, travel writing is a useful context within which to consider both the work that Nicholl produced and its contribution to colonial knowledge of the island.

Many travellers on the long sea journey to distant lands passed the time drawing and sketching; even Hickey en route to China made simple sketches of the northern coast of Tenerife and the distinctive coastline at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil (fig. 1.8). All junior naval officers were taught the skill of coastal profiling and Hickey's sketches take the wide panoramic view of the logbook complete with notes detailing latitude and date.<sup>96</sup> By contrast, Nicholl produced a series of fully worked up maritime watercolours. As was usual for seascapes of the period, all of them are apparently seen from the deck of a ship, encouraging a sense of proximity and participation on the part of the spectator. Nicholl modified the traditional approach derived from Dutch seventeenth-century seascapes, whereby the sea in the middle ground is illuminated against a background of other vessels or a distinctive coastal profile, developing two different forms of maritime studies, which he repeated. In one, a relatively calm sea is illuminated by a Claudean sun sitting low on the horizon (fig. 4.6); in the other the sea in the foreground is choppy with waves and flying fish highlighted by scratching out (fig. 4.7). Both formats show singular landmarks or harbours in the background with ships of the British fleet flying the red ensign surrounded by smaller, local craft. Thus, his outward journey was charted via Cape St Vincent, Gibraltar, the Galite Island off Tunisia, the harbour at Valetta, Alexandria, Aden (Yemen) and the coast of Ceylon. Likewise, his inward journey by the longer route via the Cape of Good Hope is illustrated by images of St Helena and the

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<sup>95</sup> Foucault 1977: 194. Said 2003: 94.

<sup>96</sup> Quilley 2011: 23.

Seychelles. Individual seascapes are worthy of attention, for example, a view off the coast of Aden by Nicholl shows a Royal Navy frigate in full sail being towed by a steamship, underlining the co-existence of the modern and traditional in Western shipping of the period (Fig. 4.8). However, if the seascapes are considered as a whole, the serial juxtaposition of British shipping and foreign lands reinforces the view of British dominance at sea.

As well as documenting his journey visually, Nicholl subsequently published an account of part of his trip in the *Illustrated London News* on 4 June 1853, which was accompanied by an engraving after one of his drawings (fig. 4.9). He travelled by the 'overland route' to India which had been established in the 1840s; it enabled a safer, cheaper and shorter journey than the route round the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>97</sup> Passengers travelled to Alexandria in Egypt by steamship then via the Mahmoudieh Canal to Atfeh and the Nile to Cairo. By 1842 the Egyptian Transit Company were using auxiliary tugs which operated under both sail and steam to transport passengers on the canal; passengers subsequently proceeded overland to Suez from where the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company operated steamships on the Red Sea, then onwards to India and Ceylon.<sup>98</sup> Nicholl depicted the canal, showing the bee-hive mud huts, tents, square houses and date palms that, as explained in his text, 'diversify the scene'; beyond, high mud embankments block the view.<sup>99</sup>

What is most unusual about Nicholl's image is that it focuses on two steam-powered tugs (fig. 4.10). The few pictures of the Canal by other European artists that exist date from the last decades of the nineteenth century and tend to stress the exotic, showing traditional sailing boats and/or women carrying water jars on their head on its banks. A wood engraving of 1882 after a drawing by the French artist Charles Auguste Loyer (1841-1905) which, like Nicholl's image appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, shows a picturesque tangle of sailing craft on the Canal (fig.

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<sup>97</sup> Jasanoff 2006: 242-3, Jacobs 1995: 42-3.

<sup>98</sup> The Egyptian Transit Company was a subsidiary of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Company, which had been granted a concession by the Pasha to operate on the Canal and the Nile.

<sup>99</sup> Nicholl 1853b: 436.

4.11).<sup>100</sup> By contrast, Nicholl illustrates the traditional huts and houses, not in terms of a timeless 'exotic', but as coeval with the modern world of the steamship. He did so at a time when Europeans travelling to North Africa believed that not only were they travelling great physical distances but also backwards through time. Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), in Morocco in the 1830s for example, described figures from the classical world existing in the present.<sup>101</sup> Others considered North Africa in terms of the biblical rather than the classical world.<sup>102</sup>

The placing of Nicholl's image in the newspaper is also noteworthy. It was displayed at the bottom of a page below four engravings of railway cuttings, stations and bridges in India which documented the arrival of the railways in the subcontinent in the mid-1850s (fig. 4.12). Nicholl's engraving of the Mahmoudieh Canal indicated British use of shorter routes to India via Egypt that had been established under Ottoman rule after the defeat of Napoleon. Completed in 1820 by Muhammad Ali, Pasha of Egypt, the construction of the canal meant that river traffic could avoid the delta outlets of the Nile thus affording easier access to the sea at Alexandria.<sup>103</sup> Such building projects, often involving forced labour, were not simple acts of benevolence; improved communications facilitated trade, movement of people, including military personnel, and territorial expansion. However, the juxtaposition of Nicholl's engraving with those of the Indian railways would have encouraged the metropolitan reader to imagine the expanding British Empire in terms of progress whereby modern forms of transport and communications were introduced to its overseas territories.

Nicholl's mass-produced texts and images reached a large audience, thereby helping to shape how Egypt and Ceylon were both represented and understood in Ireland and Britain. His illustrated texts appeared in a variety of publications including the *Dublin University Magazine*, *People's Magazine*, *Pictorial World* and *Illustrated London News*. The abolition of Stamp Duty on newsprint in 1855 meant that newspapers were now cheap and increasingly accessible. Furthermore, improvements in both communications and printing had facilitated the rise of the

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<sup>100</sup> Loye was also known as Montbard, signing his work G. Montbard.

<sup>101</sup> Letter to Pierret 29 February 1832. Quoted in Sérullaz 1998: 53.

<sup>102</sup> Jacobs 1995: 48-51.

<sup>103</sup> Leveson 2015: 199.

illustrated press. The *Illustrated London News*, founded in 1842, had by 1857, estimated readership figures of 123,000 but, given that newspapers were often hired out, even re-sold, actual readership was presumably higher.<sup>104</sup> There was no Irish equivalent of the *Illustrated London News* but the *Dublin University Magazine* likewise targeted an educated middle-class readership. Founded in 1833, its circulation figures had reached 40,000 when it ceased publication in 1877.<sup>105</sup> In addition local newspapers ran accounts of articles published elsewhere, thus both the *Dublin Weekly Nation*, on 27 November 1852 and the *Belfast News-Letter*, in December 1852 reported articles about Ceylon published by Nicholl in the *Dublin University Magazine*; likewise, the issue of the *Derry Journal* for 15 July 1868 gave accounts of those appearing in the *People's Magazine*.

On leaving the Nile at Cairo, where he was the first Irish artist to document the Sphinx and the Great Pyramid, Nicholl continued to Suez overland and thence to Ceylon. One difference between India and Ceylon to note from the outset is the difference in scale: a subcontinent and an island the size of Ireland respectively. Whereas draughtsmen in India encountered a range of differing topographies, Ceylon, as discussed below, may be considered in its entirety within the topos of the tropical island. Furthermore, unlike India, which many travellers viewed with trepidation, as a dangerous and disease-ridden environment, Ceylon was considered within the framework of a tropical idyll.<sup>106</sup> Thus Reginald Heber, Bishop of Calcutta from 1823 to 1836, likened it to Tahiti (which he had never visited).<sup>107</sup> The historian David Arnold has argued that contemporary natural history studies of 'tropical island Edens' linked regions as culturally diverse as the West Indies, Mauritius, Ceylon, Java and Sumatra whilst popular novels such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788) introduced the tropical island to the popular imagination.<sup>108</sup> Ceylon's association with this topos was

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<sup>104</sup> O'Sullivan 2010: 52.

<sup>105</sup> O'Sullivan 2010: 81 footnote 51.

<sup>106</sup> Arnold 2005: 185-225.

<sup>107</sup> Travel accounts, plays, poetry, paintings and pantomimes concerning Captain Cook's Pacific voyages, all contributed to popular knowledge of Tahiti. Wilson 2003: 58-70.

<sup>108</sup> Arnold 2005: 112, Protschky 2014: 384. See also introduction to the thesis p.18 for an analysis of the concept of 'tropicality'.

affirmed by Tennent when he described his arrival at the harbour of Galle in terms of light, colour and exuberant nature:

...the view recalls, but in an intensified degree, the emotions excited in childhood by the slow raising of the curtain in a darkened theatre to disclose some magical triumph of the painter's fancy, in all the luxury of colouring and all the glory of light. The sea, blue as sapphire, breaks upon the fortified rocks which form the entrance to the harbour; the headlands are bright with verdure; the yellow strand is shaded by palm-trees that incline towards the sea and bend their heads above the water.<sup>109</sup>

Nicholl painted the harbour many times with minor variations; he subsequently exhibited images of Galle at the Royal Academy in London and in Belfast.<sup>110</sup> Although his watercolours of the harbour may initially appear to be idealised, aesthetically pleasing tropical views, close looking reveals them to be of a modern working harbour. A version held by the Ulster Museum is typical in this respect (fig. 4.13). It demonstrates Nicholl's technique of under-drawing in pencil, which is visible through washes of watercolour, with highlights in bodycolour. The treatment of the sun and light on the water bathes the scene in a Claudean glow, with the initial sense of an idyllic timelessness enhanced by the inclusion to the right of the foreground of a traditional Ceylonese canoe complete with mast, sail and characteristic balance-log carried at the extremity of two outriggers.<sup>111</sup> In the background, however, appears the lighthouse at Point de Galle, built by the British in 1840.<sup>112</sup> The accuracy of Nicholl's depiction becomes clear when it is compared to one of the earliest photographs of Ceylon, a hand-coloured, salt print of the lighthouse taken by Frederick Fiebig in 1852 (fig. 4.14). Close inspection of Nicholl's view reveals not only the lighthouse but also a steam packet with steam rising from its funnels, to its right. Both are evidence of an encroaching colonial modernity. Furthermore, rather than including trees and foliage for a landscape 'effect' as might be expected in an

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<sup>109</sup> Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 99.

<sup>110</sup> Anon: 1865. The *Derry Journal*, Wednesday 15 July 1868 reported that in 1850, shortly after Nicholl's return from Ceylon, Queen Victoria purchased a watercolour of the harbour at Galle which had been exhibited in the Royal Academy.

<sup>111</sup> Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 103-4.

<sup>112</sup> The lighthouse was destroyed by fire in 1936.



idealised view, the areca palms, coconut palms and the architectural travellers' palm, which dominate the foreground to the left, show Nicholl's interest in closely observed studies of plants. As noted in section one of this chapter, the integration of detailed plant studies into landscape views was a persistent feature of Nicholl's work.

Nicholl had a predisposition to think of nature in terms of abundance. This abundance is evident in his so-called 'flower paintings', described above, in which distant vistas are seen through banks of meticulously detailed, wildflowers. He produced similar landscapes in Ceylon; a painting of Indian red lotus flowers on Slave Lake in Colombo made around 1846 is a typical example (fig. 4.15). The entire foreground is dominated by large red blossoms; smaller white lotus flowers are dotted amongst and behind them. A spit of land extends into the lake with weeping plants at its shoreline, backed by stands of palms; inserted between the two is a line of washing hung out to dry. In a similar manner to his Irish flower studies, Nicholl has deployed multiple viewpoints and disparities in scale. Furthermore, as with the inclusion of a steam packet in Nicholl's view of Galle, his unusual juxtaposition of the quotidian and the exotic, of drying washing and lotus flowers, underscores that it does not represent a timeless idyll but a lived-in, everyday landscape. Within a primitivising imperial discourse, temporal as well as spatial distance may be used to distinguish those remote from the metropole, thus reinforcing a sense of superiority on the part of the coloniser.<sup>113</sup> From the view of the Mamoudieh Canal, through the harbour at Galle to the view of Slave Lake in Colombo, Nicholl's landscapes resist assimilation into such a discourse. Unlike in a picturesque view where distracting details of economic activity or daily tasks are excluded, the detail of modern life intruding into an otherwise picturesque scene is what interests Nicholl. Thus, he depicted the scenes he encountered in both Egypt and Ceylon not as timeless, and not even as merely contemporaneous societies in their own right but as intersecting with a wider modern world.

Nicholl painted 'flower paintings', incorporated detailed plant studies into his landscapes, and made botanical drawings throughout his time in Ceylon. The

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<sup>113</sup> See Fabian 1983: 25-35 for a discussion of the 'denial of coevalness' and Western anthropology. Said 2003: 7.

importance of such studies to his practice is underlined by the fact that after his death in 1886, his daughter, Mary Anne Nicholl, donated fifty-six of his watercolours of the plants and fruits of Ceylon to the Royal Hibernian Academy in memory of her father.<sup>114</sup> These illustrations were of the 'cut stem' format associated with Carl Linnaeus' (1707-78) system of plant classification based on describing the sexual parts of plants. A form of botanical illustration had developed in the late eighteenth century to complement this system, depicting the flowering and/or fruiting part of a plant against a plain background.<sup>115</sup> Examples by Nicholl include a coconut blossom (fig. 4.16), leaves and berries of the cinnamon plant and a ripe cotton pod. Furthermore, Nicholl was probably aware of a form of plant geography, or proto-ecology associated with the work of the traveller and scientist Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), who travelled throughout the Spanish colonies of Central and South America, from 1799 to 1804. Humboldt's plant geography, by contrast to the Linnaean system, underscored the interdependence of diverse bio-geographical features, including climate, topography, altitude and aspect. His work, particularly his *Personal Narrative*, first published in French in 1814-25 and soon after in English, was hugely influential not only amongst natural scientists, but also on artists and the general public.<sup>116</sup> Humboldt's accounts included his personal impressions of the 'extraordinary opulence of the vegetation' and the luxuriant spectacle of the tropical scenes that he encountered.<sup>117</sup> Thus Humboldt's integrated accounts combined both empiricism and a subjective Romantic response to plant geography.

Features characteristic of both Linnaeus' and Humboldt's methods of recording flora can be discerned in an article that Nicholl wrote and illustrated for the *People's Magazine*, which was published on 1 April, 1868: 'Coffee Plantations of Ceylon and the Kaduganawa [sic] Pass'. It is illustrated by an engraving after one of his cut-stem drawings of a fruiting coffee plant (fig. 4.17). This is a simple, completely

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<sup>114</sup> These were lost when the RHA was destroyed during the British bombardment of Dublin in 1916. Miss Nicholl's gift was recorded in the *St James's Gazette*, Tuesday 26 March 1889 and the *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 23 March 1889. In 1981, the London company Spink & Son, exhibited forty-eight Ceylonese botanical watercolours by Nicholl, dated from 1846 to 1849.

<sup>115</sup> Tobin 1999: 178-9.

<sup>116</sup> For an overview of Humboldt's career see Pratt 2008: 110-140, Leask 2002: 243-99.

<sup>117</sup> Humboldt 1995: 115.

decontextualized illustration of a snipped stem showing berries against a background of leaves. In the accompanying written text, Nicholl gives a history of colonial coffee production in Ceylon from the time of the Dutch, with a detailed enumeration of acreage currently under production. In contrast to this factual account with its cut-stem illustration, Nicholl's account of his journey from Colombo to the coffee plantations surrounding Kandy records his subjective response to the landscape, reinforcing its status as an authoritative on-the-spot report.<sup>118</sup> Nicholl describes a tropical world full of vibrant nature: the 'multitudinous sounds of animal life'; river banks 'lined with teak and jack trees'; 'gardens of citron, pomegranate, orange, clove and lime trees scent the air', 'while the brightest convolvulus-formed flowers and other creepers, hanging in garlands from the trees, make the landscape ablaze with colour'; in the midst of the coffee-plantations, the blossoms presented a 'wonderful profusion of verdure and bloom....imparting a powerful perfume to the air'.<sup>119</sup> A second engraving, of the Kaduganawa Pass, is complex and detailed (fig. 4.18). It takes the form of a reverse L-shape; the longer limb running the length of the enclosed text. In his text, Nicholl uses the language of the sublime to describe how as they ascended through the pass, the great mountain 'flung its shadow' across the glen and that on the opposite side of the narrow road 'yawned a frightful chasm'.<sup>120</sup> He enhances a sense of immediacy by recounting how 'the rushing waters surged down the gorge, loudly audible'. The format of the engraving pulls the eye upwards from the brightly lit foreground via the tunnel cut into the rock, through closely observed flowering plants, shrubs and stands of trees to the bare rock of the mountainside and the steep-sided gorge and cascading waterfall. Nicholl describes the hill as 'clothed with the brightest verdure...luxuriantly wooded, and rich with every variety of colour and tint, from different kinds of trees in every stage of vegetation'.<sup>121</sup> The engraving may be monochrome, but it is skilfully done with

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<sup>118</sup> Much of the written text first appeared in an account of Nicholl's travels published by the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1852; a less detailed engraving of the Kaduganawa Pass after Nicholl appears in Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 186.

<sup>119</sup> Nicholl 1868a: 215-6

<sup>120</sup> Nicholl 1868a: 217,

<sup>121</sup> Nicholl 1868a: 217.

contrasts not only of light and shade but also textures; it evokes the abundance and variety of plant life as it gives way to bare rock as the pass is climbed.

Nicholl's interests in natural history, travel writing and newspapers all intersect in his article in the *People's Magazine*. Although his contemporary, John Capper (1814-1898), a manager of cinnamon properties and a coffee planter, likewise contributed to the English press, in his case to *Household Words*, describing his life in Ceylon, his articles are not illustrated.<sup>122</sup> The most useful comparison may be made with the work of the botanist Dr Joseph Hooker who, in 1854, published a two-volume account of his travels in the Himalayas illustrated with engravings after his own drawings. Hooker's writing style is very similar to that of Nicholl; he makes empirical observations and paints elaborate word pictures of the views. As he crosses the treeline, Hooker writes: 'The scenery is as grand as any painted by Salvator Rosa; a river roaring in sheets of foam, sombre woods, crags of gneiss, and tier upon tier of lofty mountains flanked and crested with groves of black firs, terminating in snow-sprinkled rocky peaks'.<sup>123</sup> In a preface to his journals, Hooker comments on his difficulty in describing the total effect of steepness and elevation by means of small scale illustrations.<sup>124</sup> In the accompanying illustration to the above quotation, this difficulty becomes apparent (fig. 4.19). The view is framed by trees, alternating areas of light and shade draw the eye deep into the pictorial space where it stops, then upwards to the mountain peak beyond. Hooker's written account is much more effective in describing the changing terrain. This disparity in effect is in contrast to Nicholl's account of the Kaduganawa Pass, in which both the written and visual description carry equal weight. Nicholl was of course a professional draughtsman who knew how to prepare drawings for engravings; his drawing is also more skilful. His successful format whereby the written article is embraced by his illustration may have been informed by Nicholl's long association with both the print and newspaper industries. The long limb of the reversed L of Nicholl's composition, tall and narrow

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<sup>122</sup> See Capper 1851 for example.

<sup>123</sup> Hooker 1892: 144.

<sup>124</sup> Hooker 1892: xvii.

like the gorge, draws the eye inexorably upwards through the detailed studies of plants and tress to the plunging waterfalls and hazy mountainside above.

Nicholl's engraving not only illustrates the plant geography of the Pass but also introduces a cultural context. At the top of the Pass may be seen the faint outline of a monument to Captain William Dawson, one of the Royal Engineers who had surveyed the route of the road from Colombo to Kandy, dying in 1829, seven years after the British first opened the road.<sup>125</sup> At the bottom of the engraving, a brightly lit scene may be glimpsed through a tunnel. Ancient accounts of the island held that Kandy would never be subjugated 'until the invaders bore a hole through a mountain that encircled the Kandyan kingdom'.<sup>126</sup> It was obviously expedient to do so when constructing the road but the ancient belief and therefore the symbolic potential of the tunnel was known by the British.<sup>127</sup> The image suggests not only the power of the coloniser to control communications and the transport of goods, people and military personnel through road building projects, but also to appropriate local beliefs to its own purpose. The function of Nicholl's image is to document the changing flora and geography as the pass is ascended as outlined in the written text but it may also be analysed in terms of colonial power.

Nicholl's illustrated account in the *People's Magazine* demonstrates how botanical knowledge, acquired in the colonial context, was mediated and made accessible to the general public through travel writing and newspaper accounts. As the nineteenth century progressed, natural history became less literary, more specialised: the preserve of professionals rather than amateurs like Nicholl. Writing in the context of literature, Nigel Leask has argued that travel writing in its turn became a literary genre in its own right, becoming more self-conscious and often replete with allusions, metaphors and associations.<sup>128</sup> Scholars analysing travel writing have argued that integrated accounts, such as Humboldt's, combining empirical observation and subjective accounts were rare by the opening decades of

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<sup>125</sup> Sivasundaram 2013:227-9.

<sup>126</sup> Sivasundaram 2013: 227.

<sup>127</sup> Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 186. By 1849 the tunnel had collapsed.

<sup>128</sup> Leask 2002: 1-14.

the nineteenth century.<sup>129</sup> Leask maintains that they only persisted until the 1820s.<sup>130</sup> By contrast, Arnold contends that a 'Romantic strain' persisted in scientific texts up to the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>131</sup> However, Nicholl's accounts (and Hooker's) which combine both Romantic travel writing and empirical observation, underscore the popularity of integrated accounts well into the 1850s.

Nicholl's descriptions of the Ceylonese landscape, both written and visual, emphasise its fecundity. However, his closely observed details of everyday life, particularly as demonstrated by his watercolours, prevents such imagery being interpreted in terms of a timeless idyll but rather as coeval with the world of the coloniser. His drawings and paintings of Egypt, Ceylon and Ireland all offer evidence of historic landscapes animated by signs of modern progress, be they steam tugs and ships, trains or factory chimneys.

#### Section Four: A Sketching Tour

Nicholl benefitted from his Irishness, not only when he applied for his position in Ceylon but also in the connections he made once there. This network was not as interconnected as the Irish transnational network discussed in the context of Hickey but it offered Nicholl both social support and patronage. Nicholl enjoyed a close working relationship with Tennent; he was also invited to prestigious events such as the St Patrick's Day receptions at Tennent's Colombo residence, and, on one occasion, an elephant kraal held in honour of the newly incumbent governor, Lord Torrington. An engraving after one of his sketches of the kraal subsequently appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in July 1851 accompanied by a long descriptive text by Nicholl in the form of a letter to the editor (fig. 4.20).<sup>132</sup> He also

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<sup>129</sup> Leask 2002: 5-7.

<sup>130</sup> Leask 2002: 7.

<sup>131</sup> Arnold 2005: 228-9.

<sup>132</sup> Due to matters of expediency, the production of an engraving for the illustrated press was a collaborative one: a resident draughtsman worked up a contributor's sketch for the master engraver, who then divided the image into blocks, with each jobbing engraver being responsible for one element of the overall image. O'Sullivan 2010: 52. This modular approach is evident in Nicholl's engraving.

owed his access to the politically sensitive site of the Temple of the Tooth to Tennent's patronage.<sup>133</sup> For his part, Tennent was considered an outsider by an influential group within the established civil servants in Ceylon known as the 'family compact'; he also had a fractious relationship for both personal and political reasons with Torrington.<sup>134</sup> Thus he socialised with men such as Nicholl and Dr Robert Templeton, a surgeon with the Royal Artillery and amateur entomologist, both of whom he had known in Belfast, moreover, he encouraged his countrymen to come out to Ceylon.<sup>135</sup> Torrington complained that 'people are continually coming from the neighbourhood of Belfast and at various times have been slipped into the service'.<sup>136</sup> When Tennent set out on an official tour of the interior of the island in July 1848, unsurprisingly, Nicholl was invited to accompany him.

Nicholl subsequently described the five weeks that he spent with Tennent as 'the most delightful of all of my sketching excursions, either at home or in distant lands'.<sup>137</sup> The tour provided him with a wealth of material which he worked up into watercolours, book illustrations, written texts and sketches for engravings in both journals and the illustrated press. His journey to the central Kandyan kingdom coincided with a period of unrest in both Colombo and Kandy. It was widely believed by Europeans in Colombo, including Nicholl, that events ultimately leading to the Kandyan rebellion of July 1848 had been precipitated in 1847 by the return of the *delada* by Torrington.<sup>138</sup> Its return meant that the British lost their symbolic right to rule, paving the way for the emergence of a claimant to the Kandyan throne. Tennent, however, put local disaffection in a global context when he wrote in 1859 of the 'revolutionary miasma' that had spread from Europe to Ceylon in 1848, believing that the overthrow of the French monarchy had encouraged Kandyans to

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However the illustration bears Nicholl's signature, rather than that of the engraver and/or staff draughtsman, which suggests that the engraving was made from his original sketch.

<sup>133</sup> Nicholl's daughter compiled a scrapbook, currently held by the Ulster Museum, which includes drawings, newspaper cuttings, invitations, letters and other ephemera linked to her father's time in Ceylon. It includes an invitation to the St Patrick's Day dinner. Nicholl refers to Tennent's patronage, Nicholl, Part II, 1852: 697.

<sup>134</sup> Wright 2013a: 199

<sup>135</sup> Wright 2013a: 209-10.

<sup>136</sup> As quoted in Wright 2013a: 209.

<sup>137</sup> Nicholl, Part II, 1852: 700.

<sup>138</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 529-30.

reassert their claims to independence at a time ‘when a variety of circumstances concurred to fan the tendency to discontent’.<sup>139</sup> While, as discussed above, the Ceylonese were aware of radical European movements, more pressing local matters included the imposition of new taxes by the colonial government and the expansion of coffee plantations into the Kandyan highlands with indentured labourers from India brought in to work them. In Colombo, inspired by European revolutionary thought, and with the support of the Burgher community, the Irish editor of the *Colombo Observer*, Dr Charles Elliott organised protests and petitions against the new taxes.<sup>140</sup> This highlighted not only the emergence of public dissent mediated through the English-language press (*Young Ceylon* was also written in English) but also differences within the colonising community itself.<sup>141</sup>

The most controversial act passed by Torrington in 1848 was a new Road Ordinance, which reintroduced a system of forced labour on roads; such labour could be commuted by the paying of a tax.<sup>142</sup> The official purpose of Tennent’s tour was to visit outlying villages in order to explain this and other new taxes. In addition, he intended to collect material for a book that he had started in 1847, *Ceylon: an account of the island, physical, historical and topographical*, which was subsequently published in two volumes extensively illustrated with wood engravings after Nicholl’s drawings in 1859. Tennent’s *Ceylon* is a good example of how power and knowledge were interwoven in the British imperial project.

This knowledge of Ceylon, particularly of its antiquities, was mediated through Nicholl’s draughtsmanship. Tennent wrote four books that draw on his experiences in Ceylon, all of which include illustrations after Nicholl: *Christianity in Ceylon* (1850), *Ceylon* (1859), as above, *Sketches of the natural history of Ceylon* (1861) and *The wild elephant and the method of capturing and taming it in Ceylon*

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<sup>139</sup> Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 569.

<sup>140</sup> Sivasundaram 2013:309.

<sup>141</sup> Anderson 2006: 44-6, 47-65. Anderson analyses the use of a common language, in this instance English, rather than the vernacular, by ‘creole pioneers’ who challenge colonial authority while establishing an imagined national community.

<sup>142</sup> Although forced labour had been used by the British in the building of the Colombo to Kandy road it was banned in 1831 as illiberal. Sivasundaram 2013: 233-4 and 309-16 for an account of the *Observer* protests.



(1867). Tennent's *Ceylon* was hugely successful, running into five editions in its first year after publication and remains in print today. Nicholl supplied Tennent with eighty sketches to be engraved as illustrations, thirty-one of which were subsequently included within the text.<sup>143</sup> Seventy-four engravings were included in total, making Nicholl the single largest contributor (Dr Templeton provided five). Tennent also included five engravings after sketches by Phillippe-Antoine-Hippolyte Silvaf (1801-1879), Nicholl's sole professional rival, who had arrived in Ceylon from Pondicherry in the 1820s. Silvaf gave lessons in drawing but also produced watercolours of Ceylonese 'types' and costumes; his most detailed studies, however, depict Ceylon's birds, animals and fishes.<sup>144</sup> The art practices of Nicholl and Silvaf, in effect, complemented each other.<sup>145</sup> Tennent's account is encyclopaedic in scope, including synthesis of existing scholarship but also drawing on extensive research that he had conducted on his many trips in and around the island. As the historian Jonathan Wright has highlighted, it became the definitive English-language account of Ceylon: 'it shaped the way Ceylon was viewed and experienced'.<sup>146</sup> The architectural historian James Fergusson (1808-86) for example, in his *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1876), not only acknowledged Tennent's account as 'the best work on the subject to date', but also reproduced engravings after Nicholl's drawings to illustrate his own analysis of Ceylonese antiquities.<sup>147</sup> In addition, travellers to Ceylon used Tennent's *Ceylon* as a guide anticipating its sites through Nicholl's illustrations.

Nicholl's images, accompanied by his written texts, also reached a large audience through their mass production in the illustrated press, thereby further contributing to the representation of Ceylon in both Ireland and Britain. Many of Nicholl's later accounts of his sketching tour were derived from two essays which appeared in the November and December editions of the *Dublin University Magazine*

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<sup>143</sup> In a letter dated 17 March 1859, Tennent informed Nicholl that his book has gone to press with eighty of Nicholl's sketches in the 'hands of the engraver'. Nicholl, Mary Anne, not dated.

<sup>144</sup> Pethiyagoda 1996: 67-73. Jones 2006: 40-41.

<sup>145</sup> Both also taught John Leonard Kalenberg van Dort (1851-1886) Dutch burgher, draughtsman and chronicler of Ceylonese life and landscape.

<sup>146</sup> Wright 2013a: 215.

<sup>147</sup> Fergusson, Vol I, 1876: 185.

in 1852. Nicholl's two-part description of the tour moves chronologically from place to place as he travels on the military road to Kandy and then northwards through the centre of the island. In addition to Tennent and Nicholl, the party comprised Dr Gardner of the botanic gardens at Peradeniya, Dr Williams RA, Captain Galway and Lieutenant Evatt; they were attended by numerous, unnamed local assistants. Nicholl paints elaborate word-pictures of the flora, fauna, smells, sights and sounds he encounters. He displays his erudition by quoting ancient and contemporary histories and his local knowledge in the telling of legends and explanations of religious beliefs. Descriptions of the discomforts of ticks and leeches, the dangerous animals, including snakes, alligators and bears, that he sees and the personal danger he risked of being pursued by Kandyan rebels after staying behind to complete his sketches when Tennent's party returned to Colombo, all add narrative interest. The essays end on a heroic note as, exhausted from the heat and the malaria of the swampy forests, but still carrying his sketches strapped to his back, Nicholl ends his sketching tour.

By recounting his subjective response to the land, including nostalgia for home when he chances across fields of ripe hay, Nicholl underscores the fact that his text has the authority of an eye-witness account. Furthermore, he interleaves his narrative with factual and objective observations; thus, he records the height of mountains, the diameter of lakes and likewise, measures and documents man-made structures such as tanks (reservoirs). Matthew Edney argues that subjective observations of a more general nature acquire the 'privileged' quality of empirical data when both appear in integrated texts.<sup>148</sup> That is to say, numerical observations reinforce the perceived truthfulness of more qualitative observations in the mind of the reader. In Nicholl's case, it is not only measurements but also his drawings that have the potential to contribute to the perceived verisimilitude of his written text. These appear as fine wood engravings within the written text signed by Nicholl and the engraver, Belfastman, Charles Malcolm Grey.

Nicholl's travel writing, as described above, integrates a Romantic style of writing with empirical observation. Arnold argues that Romantic descriptions of

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<sup>148</sup> Edney 1997: 67.

colonised lands should be considered a significant influence on 'imperial mentalities' in the first half of the nineteenth century, rather than merely as a literary phenomenon.<sup>149</sup> He maintains that highly descriptive, subjective accounts, such as Nicholl's, serve to insulate the reader or spectator from the realities of colonisation and its impact on the landscape. Nicholl's account of his journey travelling along the road from Colombo to Kandy is a case in point. As a high point of the road is reached, he marvels at the view: 'Mountains of various forms, faint and aerial as far as the eye can carry are seen. In mid distance rocky hills and wooded knolls appear...Pepper, with its red and green berries hanging in clusters among a marvellous profusion of flowers of every hue, twisted round and round, layer upon layer, one mass of vegetation and bloom, forming a majestic and beautiful foreground so characteristic in an eastern landscape...'<sup>150</sup> Evoking a verdant tropicity, Nicholl's prose obscures the fact that the road which afforded the view, while undoubtedly improving communications for both Kandyans and British alike, was a military road built with the purpose of moving troops into the region in a similar manner to the military roads built in Ireland after the rebellion of 1798.<sup>151</sup> Nicholl's subsequent arrival at Kandy is illustrated by an engraving of the view across the lake to the Temple of the Tooth in which he exaggerates the height of the surrounding hills and mountains of the Kadagonnava Range in order to suggest the enclosed sense of the city 'embosomed in a thick grove of coconut palms' (fig. 4.21).<sup>152</sup> He produced many similar views across the lake at Kandy, as both watercolours and engravings; it was a view that was recorded by many draughtsmen, including an Irish soldier, Patrick Lysaght (1809-1889), stationed in Ceylon from 1826-37 (fig. 4.22). Nicholl's tranquil scene with its low, intimate viewpoint, complete with boatmen and grazing cattle, reflected and reinforced a colonial discourse of peaceful co-existence between Kandy and the colonial government at a time of on-going conflict.

Leaving Kandy, Nicholl and his party progressed northwards visiting temples and the ancient ruined cities of the Kandyan kingdom. He was the first professional

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<sup>149</sup> Arnold 2005: 74-5. See also collected essays in Franklin (ed.).2006.

<sup>150</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 529.

<sup>151</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 528-9. See Sivasundaram 2013: 227-232 for an account of the construction of the Grand Military Road.

<sup>152</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 529.

civilian draughtsman to document the sites and did so before they were fully excavated. Nicholl visited both Pollanarrua (Polonnaruwa), which had reached its heyday in the twelfth century, and Anarajapooru (Anuradhapura), the seat of Kandyan kingship from c.377 BCE until 1017 when it was superseded by Pollanarrua. The first British account of Pollanarrua was written by Lieutenant Fagan of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ceylon Regiment in 1820.<sup>153</sup> Although British interest in the sites was furthered by the establishment of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1845, it was not until 1868 that the first official archaeological survey was ordered by the Surveyor-General of Ceylon, Colonel Amelius Beauclerk Fyers. The first photographic record dates from the mid-1860s and photographs taken by Lieutenant Stewart of the Royal Engineers were used as a base for illustrations to A.M.Ferguson's *Souvenirs of Ceylon*. The engraver merged several of the photographs and misrepresented their relationship to each other.<sup>154</sup> The documentary significance of Nicholl's prior drawings is thus underlined.

Nicholl brought a comprehensive, if amateur, approach to his account of the ancient cities by drawing on his experience as a draughtsman associated with antiquarian studies in Ireland. He gives a short history of each site, describing, measuring and counting statues and architectural features as well as giving vivid descriptions of the flora and fauna. A counterpoint provided by the engravings after his sketches taken on-the-spot, serves as visual proof for his written accounts of the sites. These antiquarian drawings focus on a specific object, be it ruined building or single architectural feature, with the stress on the foreground and little background detail. Two sculptures of the seated Buddha illustrate this point. They form part of a complex of four: one reclining, one standing, one seated within a deep recess and the other seated and surrounded by 'fabulous animals...and a profusion of elegant devices', all of which were carved out of a huge rock of 'everlasting granite' at Pollanarrua.<sup>155</sup> Nicholl wrote: 'These beautiful sculptures are executed with great care and skill; some of them would reflect credit on any age or country'.<sup>156</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>153</sup> Falconer 2000: 20-21.

<sup>154</sup> Falconer 2000: 21.

<sup>155</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 535.

<sup>156</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 535.

due to considerations of layout, he only includes an engraving of the two seated sculptures in his magazine article. By contrast, all four are included in an engraving after his drawings in Tennent's *Ceylon* (fig. 4.23).<sup>157</sup> A sense of the scale of the monument is indicated by the inclusion of a human figure, but Nicholl also includes measurements: the reclining Buddha for example measures forty-five feet in length. Interestingly, Nicholl made his drawings before the site was excavated; thus, neither the pillow on which the Buddha reclines nor the hand which supports his head, that may be seen today, are shown (fig. 4.24).

In many respects Nicholl's observations are conventional. He considers the ruined cities as evidence of the transience of empires: the buildings of Annarahhapoora [sic] 'have seen empires and dynasties rise, flourish and decay, yet they still remain, as monuments to its former greatness'.<sup>158</sup> He evokes the paradoxes of the tropical climate in describing monuments which still stand despite 'the destructive fertility of the climate'.<sup>159</sup> Nicholl echoes the opinions of other authors who found fault with the garishness of the flat unmodulated colours when he describes the colours of Buddhist temple painting as 'glaring'; he otherwise considers that the figures of the gods are represented to 'good effect'.<sup>160</sup> However, Nicholl's prime interest lies in the architecture and sculpture that he views. He comments on 'elaborate sculptures of exquisite workmanship' and admires the bas-reliefs he sees at the Great Temple in Anuradhapura for their dynamism, which he describes as 'beautifully drawn and full of life and action'.<sup>161</sup> He notes 'the extraordinary taste and skill' of those who constructed the ancient cities, while underlining 'the perfection the arts had attained at a very early period in the island'.<sup>162</sup> By contrast to contemporaneous authors, he makes no attempt to assess this early perfection in relation to the Western norm of classical Greek architecture.<sup>163</sup> This omission is made

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<sup>157</sup> Tennent, Vol II, 1859: 596.

<sup>158</sup> Nicholl, Part II, 1852: 694.

<sup>159</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 536.

<sup>160</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 532. See also Davy 1821: 251, Tennent, Vol I, 1859: 472-5.

<sup>161</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 537, Nicholl Part II, 1852: 694.

<sup>162</sup> Nicholl, Part I, 1852: 537.

<sup>163</sup> See Chapman 1832: 463-95. Fergusson makes a distinction between Ceylonese and Indian Buddhist antiquities. He maintained that Ceylonese antiquities were architecturally different but sculpturally similar to Indian Buddhist shrines in which he saw Graeco-Bactrian, Indo-Byzantine and Indo-Roman

more apparent by the fact that he offers a detailed description of the columns at the Toopharama (Thuparama) dagoba which, with their 'highly ornamented, exquisitely cut.. sculptured capitals' and 'elegant plinths' would have afforded comparison with classical architecture (fig. 4.25).<sup>164</sup> The stylistic origins of Buddhist architecture were a subject of debate in this period and remain a contentious issue today. Buddhism had recently been 'discovered' in Britain with interest fuelled not only by the arrival of Ceylonese Buddhist monks in London and the translation of ancient Ceylonese Buddhist texts but also by studies of Indian Buddhist antiquities, particularly those in the northwest of the subcontinent. The simplicity of Buddhist architecture, when contrasted with that of Hindu temples appealed to Western commentators; carved reliefs and figures were assessed as sculpture, while those decorating Hindu temples were dismissed as ornament and often as monstrous. The perceived sophistication of Buddhist architecture and sculpture appeared to offer material evidence not only of strong Indo-Hellenic ties, but also the possibility of common origins.<sup>165</sup>

Nicholl's reluctance to speculate about shared origins or to make external comparisons based on a Western classical norm seems odd given that he was always alert to the commercial potential of new subjects. It may be explained by Nicholl's association in Ireland with draughtsmen such as Petrie. As outlined in section one of this chapter, Petrie's goal in documenting Ireland's historical landscape was to both counter assertions that Ireland had no civilised past and that the Irish lacked the skill to build their ancient monuments without external help. Petrie also refuted fanciful claims made by authors of originary myths popular at the time.<sup>166</sup> He did so on the basis of empirical studies of the 'material antiquities' found throughout the Irish landscape rather than relying on speculation. In 1833, for example, Petrie published an essay 'On the Origins and Uses of the Round Towers of Ireland', in which he argued that they served as watchtowers. This challenged the antiquarian, Charles

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influences. He also acknowledged a possible Dravidian (southern Indian) influence in Ceylon. Fergusson, Vol I, 1876: 191, 182-4.

<sup>164</sup> Nicholl Part II, 1852:695.

<sup>165</sup> Sivasundaram 2013: 107-118, Buddhist sculpture from Gandhara- in modern-day Pakistan - discovered c.1833 was considered an ideal of Indian art by Western commentators who analysed it in external terms of the Western canon, Mitter 1992: 267-8, Guha-Thakurta 2004: 35-8.

<sup>166</sup> Stokes 1868: 68-9.

Vallancey's pseudohistory which claimed an Eastern origin for round towers comparing them to towers found in India.<sup>167</sup> Likewise, Nicholl observes and documents, limiting interpretation to the local and particular.

Given that Nicholl had worked on antiquarian projects in Ireland that emphasised the specific characteristics of Irish sites and landscape in relation to those of England, he may have wished to avoid subsuming a discussion of Ceylonese antiquities within a more general analysis of Buddhist architecture on the subcontinent. Furthermore, Nicholl was aware of the complexities of Ceylonese Buddhism which embraced various gods of the Hindu pantheon. With the assistance of pupils, he had made tracings of Hindu gods with inscriptions in both Tamil and English (fig. 4.26).<sup>168</sup> Thus when Nicholl visits the 'Great Temple at Dambool', he not only enumerates and measures the statues of the Buddha but also recognises and names the statues of the Hindu gods contained within the temple. In all his engravings and watercolours based on sketches of the antiquities, motifs derived from Hindu iconography, including figures in the thrice-bent position and fabulous animals are carefully detailed. Nicholl places the ruined cities in a Southern Asian rather than European context whilst underscoring the intersection of Ceylonese Buddhism with Hinduism. When Nicholl does make an external comparison, it is in terms of equivalence in skill and ingenuity rather than style. On encountering an enormous statue of the Buddha cut out of the rock face at Aukane Wihare, he praised its perfection, its graceful drapery, but also asserted that it rivalled the 'kindred wonders of Upper Egypt, or Central America, for antiquity, of colossal dimensions, and admirable proportions'.<sup>169</sup>

Nicholl made a final association that aligned Ireland and Ceylon when he climbed the sacred mountain of Mehintilai (Mehintale), the site where Mehindu is reputed to have brought Buddhism to Ceylon. Nicholl counts and admires the workmanship of the steps to the summit and describes inscriptions in Pali carved into

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<sup>167</sup> Lennon 2008: 88-95, xv-xvi.

<sup>168</sup> Thirty of these drawings are held by the British Museum. One of Nicholl's students, who is believed to have assisted him, was Muttu Coomaraswamy, father of the art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy. Raheem 2017: not paginated, Anglesea 1982: 148.

<sup>169</sup> Nicholl, Part II, 1852: 691-2.

the rock. A pencil sketch of the steps is included in the Nicholl scrapbook (fig. 4.27), with detailed engravings of the mountain and its *dagobas*, temples and sculptures appearing in the *Dublin University Magazine* (fig. 4.28) and Tennent's *Ceylon*. When he sees that the rock face is chiselled out to provide a bed for Mehindu, Nicholl compares it to St Kevin's bed in Glendalough, an Irish monastic site dating from the sixth century which he had previously documented.<sup>170</sup> Thus he states the 'coincidence is remarkable, between the Asiatic and European Devotee'.<sup>171</sup> At the time of Nicholl's visits, both Mehintilai and Glendalough were pilgrimage sites. As a Presbyterian and a town-dweller, Nicholl may have considered such religious practices to be based on peasant superstition. Alternatively, through his exposure to the work of scholars such as Petrie (also a Presbyterian) he may have held a more positive view: that through their intimate connection with such sites, the rural population in a historic landscape mediated between the past and the present.<sup>172</sup>

Nicholl published his illustrated accounts in newspapers, periodicals and journals, reaching a large audience. Said has argued that coloniser and colonised 'co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives and histories'.<sup>173</sup> What is at stake in the contested colonial space, a space characterised by intersecting but unequal relationships of power, are questions of not only how and by whom the histories and geographies of colonised nations are told but to whom.<sup>174</sup> Nicholl was aware of his potential audience, adapting what he wrote to what he believed to be appropriate but also marketable. For example, his two essays which appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* are more scholarly than those which subsequently appeared in the *People's Magazine*. The latter was published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge; thus, Nicholl adopts a suitably Christian moral tone in an article 'Kandy and the Temple of the Delada', published in May 1868. Although his discussion of the Kandyan revolt adds

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<sup>170</sup> Nicholl sketched and made notes concerning the ruins for inclusion in *Hall's Ireland*. See p.175, footnote 25, for details of *Hall's Ireland*.

<sup>171</sup> Nicholl, Part II, 1852: 693. Tennent likened the view of the tank (reservoir) at Minery to 'visions of Killarney, warmed by and illumined by an eastern sun', Tennent, vol II, 1859: 600.

<sup>172</sup> Murray 2004: 133-7.

<sup>173</sup> Said 1994: xxii-xxiii.

<sup>174</sup> See Bhabha, for a discussion of the Nation as narrative; questions of subject and object and who has the power to narrate in a colonial context, Bhabha 2010: 199-244, Said 1994: xiii, 12-15.



a frisson of excitement to his text, there is no sense of ongoing tensions between coloniser and colonised or of those within the colonial community itself. His Romantic style of writing, which he shared with the majority of writers contributing to the illustrated press, distances the reader from the realities of colonial life. However, scandal surrounding the excessive force used to put down the Kandyan rebellion of 1848 became the subject of parliamentary debate, resulting in the recall of both Torrington and Tennent in December 1850. Two engravings after Nicholl's sketches appeared in the *Illustrated London News* on 7 June 1851, illustrating an article, mainly comprised of comments from a Colombo journal, which underlined the public indignation at Torrington's cruelty in suppressing the rebellion. Nicholl's drawings show a Buddhist priest, subsequently executed for his part of his rebellion, framed by the doorway of the Temple at Dambulla where the claimant to the Kandyan throne had been invested and the claimant himself, drawn by Nicholl whilst held as a prisoner in Wadderaady Gaol (fig. 4.29). Although in chains, the claimant is depicted out of doors. Both portraits are reassuringly neutral, indicating neither undue aggression on the part of the colonial authorities nor particular menace on the part of the rebels. Nicholl's access to these two subjects highlights his close links to the administration through Tennent which may in its turn explain the form of his sketches.

Nicholl's most significant drawings made during the sketching tour are those of the ancient cities, since he was the first professional artist to document the sites. Thus, engravings after his drawings illustrated his own texts and those of other authors, for example, Tennent and Fergusson as noted above. Nicholl's approach to recording Ceylonese antiquities ensured that he emphasised both the local and particular while situating them within a wider Southern Asian context. He understood the importance of his visual account, showing his notebooks and sketches of Ceylonese sites to the Royal Geographical Society on his return to London. Nicholl left Ceylon in August 1850. He spent the rest of his working life divided between London, Dublin and Belfast, dying at his home in London on 16 April 1886. One month later a memorial exhibition of three hundred of his paintings was held in Belfast; as

the *Belfast Telegraph* reported, 'the Island of Ceylon...supplied many scenes for his masterly hand'.<sup>175</sup>

### Conclusion

In a speech to the House of Commons in 1834, Tennent asserted that he sat in parliament to legislate 'not merely for the concerns of my own little island, but for the interests of the most opulent and powerful empire in the universe'.<sup>176</sup> Thus, as Wright has argued, Tennent was aware of himself as an imperial actor long before he set sail for Ceylon. There is nothing to suggest that Nicholl travelled to Ceylon with ambitions beyond gaining some measure of financial security; nevertheless, he was employed by a colonial state institution and his practice, did serve empire. His draughtsmanship contributed to the imperial project by representing Ceylonese land to a metropolitan audience as peacefully colonised. In addition, by means of art education, Nicholl not only provided students with the skills in technical drawing necessary for surveying and map-making but also with the skills in design commensurate with the needs of an increasingly industrialised trading empire.

However, as has been demonstrated in this chapter, it is reductive to think of Nicholl's Ceylonese work solely in terms of service to empire. Consideration of Nicholl's time at the Colombo Academy and the emergence of Young Ceylon offered comparisons between the colonised lands of both Ceylon and Ireland. Not only was the political character of landscape highlighted but also its oppositional potential in asserting a sense of nationhood in the colonised. More usual art-historical accounts of landscape, empire and nation concerned with the first half of the nineteenth century, focus on art's role in the creation of a sense of nation in the coloniser rather than the colonised.<sup>177</sup> A further aspect of Nicholl practice is noteworthy. He shows details of everyday living in his images that underline the intersection of the lives of the colonised with the modern world of the coloniser; thus, disrupting the logic of primitivising imperialist discourses that deny the coevalness of colonised people. This

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<sup>175</sup> Anon: 1886a.

<sup>176</sup> As quoted in Wright 2013a: 202.

<sup>177</sup> See for example, Mitchell (ed.) 2002, Auerbach 2004, Crowley 2011.

is not to suggest that Nicholl's draughtsmanship was intentionally subversive, but rather that his willingness to include details he observed, such as steamships in a tropical view, allow his images to be interpreted in this way.

Consideration of Nicholl's work has added to scholarship concerning art, empire and nation by focusing on Ceylon, a country hitherto unexplored in such literature. Furthermore, intra-imperial comparisons made between Ceylon and Ireland in terms of the representation of colonised land have assisted and advanced the analysis in a way that would not be possible if Nicholl came from any of the other 'home' nations; thus, underlining the significance of his 'Irishness'.

## Conclusion

Throughout this thesis it has been argued that questions of Ireland's ambivalent relationship with the burgeoning British Empire are central to any analysis of Irish art made during the period under discussion, that is to say, from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. By considering the careers of two Irish artists who availed themselves of the opportunities offered by empire to travel to India and Ceylon, it has been possible to demonstrate how such an approach both enriches Irish art history and contributes to scholarship in the area of art, empire and nation more generally. Although a sense of adventure may have prompted Thomas Hickey, and Andrew Nicholl to travel, their primary motivation was not ideological but rather economic: coming as they did from modest backgrounds, they both sought a measure of financial security. Nevertheless, they were implicated in empire to various degrees by virtue of their artistic practices. Hickey's grand manner portraits that he painted in both Ireland and India, for example, were used in imperial propaganda, while Nicholl was employed by a colonial state institution to teach landscape painting, scientific drawing and design.

They may have been enabled by empire, but whether the two artists saw themselves as active participants in the British imperial project is a moot point. In 1788, however, when writing about the origin of painting, in his book *The History of Painting from the Earliest Accounts*, Hickey wrote that in addition to magnificent architecture bearing witness to the might of empire:

'It appears also that the sciences and arts are the inseparable attendants of great empires, of the opulence and tranquillity of states and that the culture of them there extends as well to private as well to public gratification...'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hickey 1788: xii. For a detailed discussion of Hickey's book see chapter two pp.98-102.

Hickey was referring to the ancient empires, of Egypt, Greece and Rome, but when he wrote these words he was living and working in India during the emergence of the British Empire, the largest empire the world would know. Hickey is not only promoting his own profession but also echoing contemporary thinking when he suggests that the cultivation of the arts both contributes to, and is furthered by, a prosperous and stable society. In addition, Hickey anticipates modern scholarship which argues that imperial expansion is not consequent solely on military or economic might but that questions of culture, science, collection and differentiation of knowledge, are all 'attendant' on and integral to the processes of empire building.<sup>2</sup> Hickey continues the passage thus:

for the mind of man being by nature anxious of further acquisitions, though he be possessed of all this world can afford him, he wishes that after life is here at an end, he may, in remembrance continue to exist. To this end, he first is prompted, or ought to be, to deeds of virtue; and next he forms a wish to have them recorded. In this, no inconsiderable share of action falls to the imitative arts, where painting and sculpture hold a considerable rank of eminence.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, life is transient and empires fall but it is through its buildings, monuments and art that both men and empires are remembered.<sup>4</sup> Hickey stresses the importance of the intersection of art and empire; a point that has been made throughout the present thesis. He is, however, referring to art and empire generally; where the thesis departs from Hickey is in its specific emphasis on Irish art and the British empire.

For Hickey the role of the 'imitative arts' of painting and sculpture, is to record the lives and deeds of men engaged in empire building.<sup>5</sup> However, as has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, the work of Hickey and Nicholl should not be

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<sup>2</sup> See for example, Wagoner 2003: 783-814, Washbrook 2004: 479-516, Pinney 2012: 231-261, Said: 1993, 1985, 2003, Cohn: 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Hickey 1788: xii.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholl briefly discusses Ceylon's ancient cities in terms of an expression of not only the greatness but also the inevitable rise and decay of empire. Nicholl Part II 1852: 694.

<sup>5</sup> Hickey 1788: xii.

thought of as an unequivocal record of facts or as mere illustration to imperial histories but rather as complex agents of meaning production in their own right. By both situating the analysis of their pictures within a specific historical moment and paying attention to the visual vocabulary available to them as artists, it has been possible to offer more nuanced interpretations of the images as indicative of social and political change or as constitutive of the processes of empire itself. Close analysis of the paintings serves to highlight significant details which can be drawn together to highlight the structures of power embedded within the image. In this way, differential relations of power that suggest not only the power of the coloniser but also the resistance and/or agency of the colonised become apparent. A key example here is Hickey's masterwork, his painting of Mowbray and his *banian*, made in the commercial world of late eighteenth century Calcutta, which suggests both the agency of the indigenous elite and the co-existence of different knowledge systems in what was undoubtedly a contested colonial space. Furthermore, as demonstrated by his picture of Mackenzie and his Indian assistants, which was painted in the aftermath of the Battle of Seringapatam, this co-existence and interdependence of knowledge systems extended into the early nineteenth century. Anglo-Indian relations are shown to have been much more complex than a simple binary reading of active coloniser opposed to passive colonised permits; this kind of complexity characterises not only the changing commercial world of Calcutta but also the more militarised town of Madras.

The importance of closely observed local detail in both Hickey's Indian portraits, as outlined above, and Nicholl's Irish and Ceylonese views was noted throughout the thesis. This is not to suggest that by depicting such material, either artist was intentionally making a point, but rather, that such, often inadvertent, inclusions allow the images to be interpreted against the grain of totalising imperial discourses. In Nicholl's case, his willingness to show everyday local detail in the landscapes that he painted in both Ireland and Ceylon resulted in images that cannot be readily assimilated into overarching primitivising imperial discourses that deny the coevalness of the colonised and the coloniser. In other words, consideration of both

Hickey's and Nicholl's work underlines the significance of the local in the global imagining of empire.

A further key question in terms of the local, is whether the Irishness of the two artists actually mattered. Discussion of his art training in Dublin was certainly relevant to an analysis of Hickey's Indian paintings. It was only through an understanding of the professional contexts he brought to his work that the significance of how he represented his Indian subjects could be assessed. Furthermore, consideration of the local in terms of the operational value of Irishness, highlighted the importance of an Irish eighteenth-century transnational network of patronage. The collective strength of this network allowed men of the middling sort like Hickey, with no family connections, to prosper. Furthermore, its transnational reach underscored the networked nature of Britain's empire. Though less extensive, Nicholl's local connections in Belfast resulted in his employment in Ceylon. Ethnicity obviously played a structuring role in other networks of patronage: for example, amongst the Scottish in India. Indeed, artists could be excluded from networks of patronage on the basis of ethnicity.

However, the significance of the artists' Irishness is not solely about ethnicity and patronage. When analysing Hickey and Nicholl's images made in India and Ceylon, intra-imperial comparisons and contrasts could be made that were only possible because the artists were Irish: Ireland itself was a colonised land. Thus, in terms of power and imperial propaganda, the display of Hickey's portrait of Wellesley in the Banqueting Hall in Madras could be compared with serial displays of men serving the British Empire in Ireland; for example, the vice-regal portraits in both Dublin Castle and the Mansion House and, ducal and regal portraits in the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham in Dublin. Likewise, when considering the work of Nicholl, the nexus of art, empire and power became apparent through an analysis of the militarised landscapes of both Ireland and Ceylon. The discussion focused not only on images of the built environment, such as military roads, but also on the way that landscape views of colonised land could normalise the presence of an occupying army. By contrast, analysis of Nicholl's everyday landscapes and his antiquarian studies made in both Ireland and Ceylon demonstrated how views of colonised lands

may resist assimilation into overarching imperial discourses. Perhaps most significantly however, discussion of Young Ceylon and Young Ireland brought the analysis of Nicholl's Ceylonese career back to Ireland as the oppositional potential of landscape in developing a political consciousness and sense of nationhood amongst the colonised was assessed.

It is difficult to determine the legacies of the two artists. Other Irish artists did follow their paths and travel far afield within the British Empire seeking work. The Dublin-born, miniaturist and portraitist, George Place (c.1763-1805) for example, who like Hickey, received his training at the Dublin Society schools, travelled to India in 1798. Finding the Calcutta market dominated by Robert Home, Place travelled to Lucknow where he found work in the court of the Nawab of Oudh. He died there in 1805.<sup>6</sup> Samuel Andrews (1767-1807), also an Irish miniaturist, worked in Calcutta and Madras before moving to Patna where he died in 1807.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps inspired by the regular contributions Nicholl made to the *Illustrated News*, painter and illustrator, Aloysius O'Kelly (1853-1936) became a 'special artist' for the paper in 1880, providing illustrations that dealt with peasant unrest and the activities of the Land League in Ireland from 1881 to 1883.<sup>8</sup> By 1883 he was in Sudan, sending drawings that detailed Britain's war with the Mahdi to *Pictorial World*.<sup>9</sup> O'Kelly sent further drawings from Cairo to both the *Illustrated London News* and *Pictorial World*.<sup>10</sup> These examples represent a few of the Irish artists who travelled throughout the British Empire. Insofar as scholars have engaged with the question of Irish art and empire, it has tended to be in terms of Ireland as a colonised land; the implication of Irish art or artists in the British imperial project has largely been ignored. In the introduction to the thesis it was noted that scholars from many disciplines have broadened their scope beyond Ireland's colonial relationship with England to situate their analyses in the context of the wider British Empire; historians, for example, consider Ireland as

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<sup>6</sup> For an account of Place's career see Archer 1979: 323-8, Caffrey 2008: 98.

<sup>7</sup> Caffrey 2008: 99.

<sup>8</sup> Founded in 1789, the Irish National Land League campaigned for the three 'Fs': fair rents, fixity of tenure and free sale of an interest in property. Jackson 1999: 117-132.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abdallah, the Mahdi, fought to rid the Sudan of British, Egyptian and Turkish forces. O'Sullivan 2010: 107.

<sup>10</sup> For a comprehensive account of O'Kelly's career see O'Sullivan 2010.



both a colonised and colonising country. Art-historical scholarship has tended to lag behind. The aim of the present thesis is to contribute to Irish art-historical scholarship by addressing both aspects of Ireland's relationship with the British Empire when analysing the work of Hickey and Nicholl.

Hickey and Nicholl were professional artists of modest ability; furthermore, their work could be uneven. The quality of their work goes some way to explaining why the images they made in India and Ceylon are rarely displayed. In the introduction to this thesis, however, it was noted that a reluctance to engage with the disputed legacy of empire meant that art showing imperial subjects, held by public institutions in England, tends not to be on display. Given Ireland's colonial and recent history, the subject of empire is an extremely contentious one.

Hickey's Irish portraits are held by various public institutions in Ireland and the National Gallery of Ireland; his Indian portraits by public collections in Dublin, London, New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Srirangapatna. His Indian work has featured in exhibitions such as *The Raj: India and the British 1600-1947* held in 1990 at the National Portrait Gallery in London and Tate Britain's *Artists and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past* held in 2015 but otherwise is rarely on public display: at present one is on display in Dublin, two in the Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata. Nicholl was a prolific artist; the Ulster Museum alone, has over four hundred of his Irish landscapes but only two of his Ceylonese views. By contrast, twenty eight of Nicholl's Ceylonese landscapes are on permanent display, in purpose-built vitrines, in the National Museum in Colombo; they were conserved and restored by the British Museum to mark fifty years of Sri Lankan independence (conclusion, fig. 1). An aim of the present thesis is to draw attention to Hickey and Nicholl's understudied images.

This is a body of work that should not be ignored. By analysing the careers of the two Irish travelling artists this thesis has broken new ground. Not only has it highlighted how Irish art-historical scholarship of the period may be enhanced by analysing the ways in which Irish artistic practice intersected with the processes of the wider British Empire but also, in doing so, it includes a discussion concerning the representation of Ceylonese land by Western artists. The subject of art, the British

Empire and Ceylon is rarely studied. Furthermore, the two artists travelled and worked within the Empire at different periods in its history; thus, illuminating contrasts could be drawn between Hickey's experiences in India as Britain's trading empire became increasingly colonial in orientation and those of Nicholl who was employed by a colonial state institution in Ceylon as Britain's empire of conquest reached its zenith. The thesis also offers insights into aspects of art and empire that are often overlooked such as the role of the 'middling sort' in the imperial project, networks of patronage, colonial art education, the illustrated press, botanical and antiquarian studies. It also draws attention to the agency and resistance of the colonised; furthermore, parallels drawn between Ireland and Ceylon demonstrated how art not only played a role in the construction of a sense of nation in the coloniser but also the colonised. By studying the peripatetic careers of Hickey and Nicholl, the present thesis not only contributes to Irish art-historical research but also emphasises the place of Ireland, India and Ceylon in analyses of art in the context of empire and nation.

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